



NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN POST-REVOLUTIONARY IRAN

by

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December 2013

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			<i>Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188</i>	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington DC 20503.				
1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)		2. REPORT DATE December 2013	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED Master's Thesis	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN POST-REVOLUTIONARY IRAN			5. FUNDING NUMBERS	
6. AUTHOR(S) Vedat Er				
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING /MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) N/A			10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER	
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government. IRB Protocol number ____N/A____.				
12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited			12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE	
13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words) <p>This thesis questions in what ways two major social movements, the Student Movement in 1999 and Green Movement in 2009, affected Iranian domestic politics. It argues that, although these movements seemed to fail, they succeeded in important ways. Essentially, these movements altered domestic politics by their emergence and resilient continuity as an alternative way of political participation for Iranians. The result of their continuation and expansion encouraged, and continues to encourage, more liberal tendencies. These movements occurred since the 1979 Iranian revolution, itself, planted their seeds in post-revolutionary Iran by its outcomes, which created political opportunities, mobilizing structures, resources, and framing. Social movements became an alternative way of political participation, beginning from the Student Movement, and initiated the early changes in public opinion for a more liberal regime in 1999. Although the Iranian government brutally suppressed the Student Movement, its participants continued their struggle. The Green Movement in 2009 was a pro-democracy movement that united separate opposition groups in society, with broader frames and peaceful tactics, as a continuance of the Student Movement. It arguably shook the Islamic government's legitimacy and changed Iranians' opinion, which was reflected in the election of a reformist candidate in the 2013 presidential elections.</p>				
14. SUBJECT TERMS Iran, Islamic Republic of Iran, Iranian Domestic Politics, Social Movements, Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures and Resources, Framing, Consequences of Social Movements, Student Movement, Green Movement, Liberalization			15. NUMBER OF PAGES 107	
			16. PRICE CODE	
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT Unclassified	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE Unclassified	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT Unclassified	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UU	

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SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN POST-REVOLUTIONARY IRAN

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN SECURITY STUDIES
(MIDDLE EAST, SOUTH ASIA, SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA)**

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
December 2013**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis questions in what ways two major social movements, the Student Movement in 1999 and Green Movement in 2009, affected Iranian domestic politics. It argues that, although these movements seemed to fail, they succeeded in important ways. Essentially, these movements altered domestic politics by their emergence and resilient continuity as an alternative way of political participation for Iranians. The result of their continuation and expansion encouraged, and continues to encourage, more liberal tendencies. These movements occurred since the 1979 Iranian revolution, itself, planted their seeds in post-revolutionary Iran by its outcomes, which created political opportunities, mobilizing structures, resources, and framing. Social movements became an alternative way of political participation, beginning from the Student Movement, and initiated the early changes in public opinion for a more liberal regime in 1999. Although the Iranian government brutally suppressed the Student Movement, its participants continued their struggle. The Green Movement in 2009 was a pro-democracy movement that united separate opposition groups in society, with broader frames and peaceful tactics, as a continuance of the Student Movement. It arguably shook the Islamic government's legitimacy and changed Iranians' opinion, which was reflected in the election of a reformist candidate in the 2013 presidential elections.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

GDP	Gross Domestic Product
I.A.S.	Islamic Association of Students
IRI	Islamic Republic of Iran
IRGC	Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps
MOI	Ministry of Interior
MSFIL	Muslim Students Following the Imam's Path
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
O.C.U.	Office for Consolidation of Unity (Daftar-e Tahkim-e Vahdat)
SAVAK	Organization of Intelligence and National Security (Sāzemān-e Ettelā'āt va Amniyat-e Keshvar)
SMS	Short Message Service
WUNC	Worthiness, Unity, Numbers and Commitment

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my sincerest thanks to three groups of people for their support in the course of this thesis' preparation and my postgraduate education in NPS. First, chairman of the National Security Affairs department professor Mohammad Hafez, my advisor professor Anne Marie Baylouny, and second reader Ryan Gingeras have inspired me and been very helpful about Middle East politics and in particular social movement in Iran; I thank all of them for their guidance and expertise. Second, I am very grateful to my family. My parents, my wife, and my children have encouraged me to continue my education, prepared a comfortable environment, and been patient. Finally, I would like to thank the Turkish Army for giving me the opportunity to have an education abroad and a chance to better serve my county, Turkey.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The recent Green Movement in Iran demonstrated, once again, the Iranians' commitment to change their regime to more liberal ways by social movements, beginning with the nation's 1979 Islamic Revolution. This thesis questions in what ways two major social movements, the Student Movement in 1999 and Green Movement in 2009, affected Iranian domestic politics, in order to better understand and explain the role of social movements in Iranian domestic politics. The objective of this thesis is to show that although these movements seemed to fail, they succeeded in important ways. Essentially, these movements altered domestic conditions by their emergence and resilient continuity in Iranian domestic politics as an alternative way of political participation for ordinary Iranians. The result of their continuation and expansion is to encourage more liberal tendencies.

Among the diverse political systems of the Middle East, contemporary Iran is a country that was founded after a revolutionary social movement which ended the tyranny of a monarch in favor of a more liberal political system that could provide better economic conditions, equality, justice, and respect for its citizens' indigenous values. The last three decades, however, proved the opposite. After the revolution, the Shi'a ulema founded a theocracy with semi-democratic institutions, the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI), under its charismatic leader, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini and his concept of *wilayat al-faqih*¹ (guardianship of the jurist). The Iranian revolution toppled the last Shah, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, and finished Iran's 2,500-year-old monarchy; Iranians, however, could not solve their long-lasting problems with a mere change of regime. Iran's complex political system has been dependent on divine and popular legitimacy that has unelected and elected institutions, both of whose members have linkages with different factions of its society.² The new regime consolidated its power in the early years of revolution and during the Iran-Iraq war. The new Iranian regime has depended on

¹ Ibrahim Moussawi, *Shi'ism and the Democratization Process in Iran: With a Focus on Wilayat al-Faqih* (London: Saqi Books, 2011), 7.

² David E. Thaler et al., *Mullahs, Guards, and Bonyads: An Explanation of Iranian Leadership Dynamics* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2010), 22.

Islamic law to establish justice and freedom by preventing the tyranny of the ancient government. The last three decades, however, showed that the Islamic Republic could not provide a more liberal regime, better economic conditions, equality, justice, and respect for Iranians' values, and recent events arguably shook its legitimacy.

Especially after the end of Iran-Iraq war and the death of Khomeini in 1989, Iranian society began to question the regime and seek solutions for the IRI's continued economic, social, and political problems. Iranian society has changed during these years and become alienated from the revolutionary government's ideology. Iranians organized in response to different events, utilizing Iranian mobilizational resources and indigenous Iranian cultural frames. The social movements in post-revolutionary Iran became an effective way of change and driving force of liberalization with their resilient resistance to Iranian state repression.

A. IMPORTANCE OF IRANIAN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Analyses of the Iranian Student Movement and the Green Movement contribute both to the theory of social movements and to our understanding of the internal dynamics that shape the IRI's domestic politics. This thesis analyzes Iranian social movements and their effects in a theocracy with semi-democratic institutions and a different culture. It sheds more light on Iranian internal dynamics, in order to help scholars of politics and policy makers to better assess Iranian domestic politics for future work.

The Iranian political system provides political opportunities for opposition groups ranging from opportunities to threats in a distinct culture. The presidential and parliamentary elections in Iran create space for various factions of the society to discuss, somewhat freely, its problems and look for solutions. The IRI's founding ideology promotes the participation of the people in governance as long as this process does not threaten the guardianship of the jurist and Islamic law, but the regime at the same time severely represses any opposition that suggests even moderate change for the system. Under these contradictory conditions, the Student Movement and Green Movement are good examples of "contentious politics"³ in a different culture, where Shi'a Islam

³ Charles Tilly, *Social Movements, 1768-2004* (Colorado: Paradigm Publishers, 2004), 3.

influences almost every aspect of daily life and frames economic, social, and political debates.

The analyses of the Student and Green movements explain how social movements affect Iranian society and domestic politics in the IRI, in order to increase knowledge about internal politics in the closed Iranian system. Social movements in Iran are an increasingly important component of Iran's internal dynamics, and serve as another way for Iranians to get involved in politics. Even if they cannot manage to achieve major institutional changes, they still manage to challenge the IRI's authority and arbitrary rule by their struggle to change Iranian society, culture, and government policies. Their resilient existence in Iran, beginning after the Student Movement in 1999, made and still makes Iranians more active in politics, and pushes liberalization from below due to their insistence on a place in domestic politics. This testifies their importance. The IRI's violent suppression of the Green Movement, after the 2009 Iranian presidential elections, also exemplifies this important popular response to the IRI's failure to fulfill its citizens' economic, social, and political needs.

B. SOCIAL MOVEMENT THEORY

To analyze why, when, and how the Student Movement in 1999 and the Green Movement in 2009 emerged and how they affected IRI's domestic politics after the revolution, it is proper to use the social movement theory although it mainly explains social movements in democracies. In its cultural frames, the Islamic Republic of Iran's political system partially provides similar political opportunities and mobilizing structures as those of liberal democracies, and this justifies the use of social movement theory to explain social movements in post-revolutionary Iran.

Social movement theory argues that social movements take part in the internal dynamics of domestic politics as a continuum of traditional methods. Scholars of social movement theory define a social movement as a collective, organized, conscious, sustained, and non-institutional challenge to authorities or cultural beliefs and practices.⁴

⁴ Jeff Goodwin and James M. Jasper, "Editors' Introduction," in *The Social Movements Reader: Cases and Concepts*, ed. Jeff Goodwin and James M. Jasper (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003), 4.

The father of social movements, Charles Tilly, asserts that social movements emerged in Western Europe and North America during the eighteenth century as a new and distinctive form of “contentious politics.”⁵ From then on, they became an organized public effort making collective claims, employment of several political actions, and presentation of the worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment (WUNC)⁶ of their participants. He suggests that social movements support democratization as much as they affect public politics and enable their participants to take part in political decision making by their outcomes or “by-products of their action.”⁷

Social movements occur when political opportunities and threats or perceived political opportunities signal incentives for formal and informal organizations or groups to mobilize ordinary people with mediation of frames in their cultures. Political opportunities vary, from political opportunities to threats that give incentives, with the help of cultural frames, to mobilizing structures and resources in societies. Various scholars of social movements contribute to this theory when they criticize or discuss different aspects of political opportunities, mobilizing resources, and frames. For example, while Sidney Tarrow and Charles Tilly define six properties of regimes that facilitate or inhibit social movements,⁸ Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald reduce these factors to four and emphasize the importance of mobilizing structures and the framing process that enable social movement organizations to utilize these opportunities to demand change.⁹

Paul D. Almeida proposes two avenues for opposition regarding opening political opportunities and threats in authoritarian settings like Iran. While the political system

⁵ Charles Tilly, *Social Movements 1768-2004*, 3.

⁶ Ibid., 5.

⁷ Ibid., 143.

⁸ Sidney Tarrow and Charles Tilly, “Contentious Politics and Social Movements,” chap. 19 in *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*, ed. Carles Boix and Susan C. Stokes (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 440.

⁹ Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald, “Introduction: Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Framing Process-Toward a Synthetic, Comparative Perspective on Social Movements,” in *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements*, ed. Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 10.

provides political opportunities like institutional access, competitive elections, elite conflict, external allies, and relaxation of state repression for the opposition to launch collective action on the one hand, threats like state-attributed economic problems, erosions of rights, and increasing state repression also cause mobilization on the other.¹⁰ Charles Kruzman argues that oppositional organizations' internal dynamics and perceived political opportunities are more important for mobilization.¹¹ As framing processes mediate between political opportunities and mobilizing resources, by creating cognitive liberation of the participants and groups in social movements, other scholars like Jane Mansbridge, Francesca Polletta, and James M. Jasper add the importance of oppositional consciousness¹² and collective identity¹³ to this process.

Social movements may have expected or unexpected outcomes that can change government institutions, different policies, political disclosures, their cultural environment, their participants' identity, and public opinion. Social movements' success and outcomes differ by the utilization of these opportunities, types and internal dynamics of opposition groups, and the efficacy of the frames, all of which enable social movements to change their external structures from formal institutions to public opinions or political disclosures. While a major part of social movement theory tries to explain when, why, and how social movements emerge, grow, and disappear or what their tactics are, another growing part of the study deals with finding what the consequences of social movements are and how efficient they are in affecting politics. In *How Social Movements Matter*, Marco Giugni, Doug McAdam, and Charles Tilly present different perspectives of social movements' political consequences by the social movements' interaction with

¹⁰ Paul D. Almeida, "Opportunity Organizations and Threat-Induced Contention: Protest Waves in Authoritarian Settings," chap. 7 in *Readings on Social Movements: Origins, Dynamics, and Outcomes*, ed. Doug McAdam, David A. Snow (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 106.

¹¹ Charles Kruzman, "Organizational Opportunity and Social Movement Mobilization: A Comparative Analysis of Four Religious Movements," *Mobilization* 3, no. 1 (1998), 25.

¹² Jane Mansbridge, "The Making of Oppositional Consciousness," in the *Oppositional Consciousness: The Subjective Roots of Social Protest*, ed. Jane Mansbridge and Aldon Morris (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 1.

¹³ Francesca Polletta and James M. Jasper, "Collective Identity and Social Movements," *Annual Review of Sociology* 27 (2001): 285.

different interest groups, political parties, and their social environment.¹⁴ Another consensus suggests that, although social movements fall short in gaining their immediate goals, they do change public opinion, political disclosures, government institutions, and their societies' cultures.¹⁵

The 1979 Islamic Revolution's institutions built the conditions under which social movements in Iran can occur. There are four steps to the argument underlying this thesis, derived from the social movement theory as it applies to the Iranian case.

1. Political Opportunities and Threats

The political system of the Islamic Republic of Iran provides both political opportunities and threats for the Student and Green Movements' groups to mobilize and demand change, despite the government's severe repression against any emerging threat.

2. Mobilizing Structures and Resources

Iranian civil society after the revolution has built ample organizations and resources to take part in social movements and to change the IRI's domestic policy.

3. Framing

Shi'a Islam, evolving with the developing global values of liberty, provides frames that offer a high potential to link political opportunities and mobilizing resources in Iran.

4. Outcomes

Although the Iranian Student and Green Movements could not manage an entire regime or cause a major institutional change, they became a way of political participation and a driving force of liberalization that changed Iran's society, culture, and public

¹⁴ Marco Giugni, "How Social Movements Matter: Past Research, Present Problems, Future Developments," int. in *How Social Movements Matter*, Marco Giugni, Doug McAdam, and Charles Tilly (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), XV.

¹⁵ David S. Meyer, "How Social Movements Matter," *Contexts* 2, no. 4 (2003), 31.

opinion, affected its factions and their linked elite, and eventually pushed the government to change its domestic politics to more liberal ways.

Consequently, this thesis argues that the Iranian Student and Green Movements make Iranian civil society more active in domestic politics by utilizing IRI's opportunities, Iranian society's mobilizing resources, and its cultural frames. Although IRI's government has been trying to destroy any threat to its regime, these social movements push the IRI to implement more liberal policies, even as the movements fail to achieve any institutional changes by their resistance to state repression and influence on public opinion that leads the electorate to elect reformist presidents.

To test these hypotheses and final argument, the outcomes of Iranian revolution and two major social movements in Iran need to be examined. As background, one should understand the 1979 Iranian revolution and its outcomes, because that event marks the beginning of the Iranian contemporary state structure and long-lasting social, economic, and political problems in Iran's post-revolutionary structure. Later, the reformist period in Iran after the Iran-Iraq War and the Student Movement in 1999 help us to understand to what extent this period with the Student Movement changed Iranian domestic politics and society. Lastly, one should analyze the reemergence of hardliners in Iran with Ahmadinejad and the Green Movement in 2009 to understand how and why the IRI's incumbent government first provided political opportunities and later suppressed significant Iranian opposition against the regime, and in what ways the Green Movement affected Iranian domestic politics.

C. LITERATURE REVIEW

Although the literature that specifically addresses in what ways the 1999 Student Movement and 2009 Green Movement affected Iranian domestic politics and changed its internal dynamics is limited, a great number of scholarly works on political economy, sociology, and politics presents two opposing arguments, one pessimistic and the other optimistic, for this thesis. The pessimistic camp argues the Islamic regime after the 1979 revolution is still stable and unwilling to change. The scholars of this camp claim that the IRI's state structure is too rigid. The IRI political system's unelected institutions, with

their security and economic offshoots, leave no chance for Iranian social movements to affect the IRI's domestic politics. Opposed to this argument, the optimistic camp proposes that, from the beginning of the Student Movement, Iranian society has increasingly become aware of the regime's problems, corruption of government officials, and illegitimacy of the regime's ideology. Iranians demand change by becoming more active in these social movements. They push the IRI's government to change its policies in a more liberal direction.

1. Iranian Revolution

As a starting point of new social movements in Iran, numerous scholars analyze different aspects of the 1979 Iranian revolution, and many conclude that the revolution had happened at an unexpected time, and it remains unfinished even today. The writings about the 1979 Iranian revolution provide a beginning for this thesis to unfold the main causes, dynamics, and consequences of two major social movements in Iran after the revolution. They demonstrate different revolutionary groups, their motives for mobilization against the Shah, the alliance of the urban middle class with the Shi'a ulema, the leadership of the Shi'a ulema, their links and organization that enable Iranians to support the movement, and the importance of Shi'a Islam with its practices that became one of the main frames of the revolution. They show how the social and political outcome of the revolution sowed the seeds of today's economic, social, and political problems in Iran.

For example, Mehran Kamrava emphasizes the inevitability of the revolution in his book, *Revolution in Iran: The Roots of Turmoil*. He analyzes the revolution in a framework in which internal and international developments reduced the last Shah's power and authority, and drastic social change alienated oppositional groups from the state where these oppositional groups increased their activities and developed effective links among themselves and different social classes.¹⁶ This piece has a lot of information about revolutionary groups, social classes, their claims, and motivations.

¹⁶ Mehran Kamrava, *Revolution in Iran: The Roots of Turmoil* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 12.

Charles Kruzman, in his book, *The Unthinkable Revolution in Iran*, discusses several explanations for the Iranian revolution and argues that the 1979 Iranian revolution occurred with the perceived opportunities and expectation of a viable regime¹⁷ that mobilized a large number of Iranians from every strata of the society against the last Shah's repression. He covers all possible explanations for revolution and shows the importance of perceived opportunities and the efficacy of links and Shi'a Islam's framing. His article, "The Iranian Revolution," examines the political opportunity structure in monarchies.¹⁸

Poor People's Movements in Iran, by Asef Bayat, examines the lives of Iran's poor at the time of the revolution and their contribution to protest waves by their informal links and practices in the squatter and shanty towns of Tehran. He demonstrates the ordinary people's collective power to gain their space and rights. Benjamin Smith's article about *Bazaar* discusses the mobilization capacity and behavior of the marketplace; it presents the role of merchants at the time of the revolution and how their support alters the economic policies of the government after the revolution.¹⁹ Said A. Arjomand focuses on the significance of Shi'a Islam and political dynamics of radical change in Iran six years after the revolution in his article,²⁰ and explains the effects of revolution from the beginning of Khomeini's leadership to his successors in the book, *After Khomeini: Iran Under his Successors*.

In *Democracy in Iran*,²¹ Ali Gheissari and Vali Nasr examine both the IRI's state-building and democracy-building after the revolution, with a historical view that reveals how the domestic power balance has changed and created new factions in Iranian

¹⁷ Charles Kruzman, *The Unthinkable Revolution in Iran* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2004), 136.

¹⁸ Charles Kurzman, "The Iranian Revolution," in chap. 5 *The Social Movements Reader: Cases and Concepts*, ed. Jeff Goodwin and James M. Jasper (Massachusetts: Blackwell, 2003), 40.

¹⁹ Benjamin Smith, "Collective Action with and without the Islam: Mobilizing the Bazaar in Iran," chap. 7 in *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*, ed. Quintan Wiktorowicz (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2004), 199.

²⁰ Said Amir Arjomand, "Iran's Islamic Revolution in Comparative Perspective," *World Politics* 38, no. 3 (1986), 383.

²¹ Ali Gheissari and Vali Nasr, *Democracy in Iran: History and the Quest for Liberty* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

international dynamics. Moreover, *The Shi'ism and Democratization Process* by Ibrahim Moussawi explains how Islam and *wilayat al-faqih* shapes the Islamic Republic by its dual legitimacy, where divine and public authorities act based upon different perspectives, from jurisprudence to the state's constitution.²² Finally, Reza Razavi asserts that the IRI's current factionalist political system and lack of political parties, such as in liberal democracies, satisfy some of its internal problems but leave other interest groups out of political decision making, which dooms the IRI to either reform or collapse by its vibrant society.²³

2. Pessimistic Camp: No Liberal Change in Iran

Many scholars in the pessimistic camp suggest that the IRI has rigid institutions, controlled by a conservative post-revolutionary elite that is unwilling to change Iranian domestic politics to liberal ways no matter what the Student and Green Movements have done and continue to do in Iran. This camp claims that even a moderate change in the IRI is unlikely because of the IRI's state structure and the rigidity of its unelected institutions such as the Supreme Leader and Guardian Council. In addition to these institutions, their tailed security and economic branches, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and *bonyads* (Islamic charity organizations), dominate all social, economic, and political platforms in Iran. They curtail development of an economically independent, strong middle class that may support oppositional groups by mobilizing resources. The subsidies and high public employment rates that still ensure the social contract in Iran help the incumbent government to control large parts of the society. The scholars of this camp take the Supreme Leader's and the IRI president's reactions to the recent Green Movement, as well as the severe state repression and rigid institutions of the IRI, as the main evidence of their arguments.

In particular, *Mullahs Guards and Bonyads: An Explanation of Iranian Leadership Dynamics*,²⁴ is one of the best resources about the IRI's constitutional

²² Ibrahim Moussawi, *Shi'ism and the Democratization Process in Iran*, 7.

²³ Reza Razavi, "The Road to Party Politics in Iran: 1979-2009," *Middle Eastern Studies*, 46, no. 1 (2010), 96.

²⁴ David E. Thaler et al., *Mullahs, Guards, and Bonyads*, 5.

structure and clearly defines both the IRI's unelected and elected institutions. It draws the big picture of Iranian domestic power balance. This book shows what sort of Islamic Republic Khomeini built and how his successors now run it according to their own interests. Barbara Ann Rieffer-Flanagan, in her comprehensive work, argues that the IRI has changed during its four decades in different areas. She suggests it is not impossible for a "religiously inspired nation-state like Iran"²⁵ to undertake a political change toward more liberal ways. However, she concludes that the IRI's current Supreme Leader Ali Hosseini Khamenei and his supporters are more than willing to unleash severe repression on any opposition, just as the Chinese Communist Party would do.

Farhad Kazemi asserts that "Iranian politics is a system made by clerics for the clerics and for their supporters, who possess a near monopoly on the spoils of the revolution and the country's resources."²⁶ In his two articles, "The Iranian Enigma"²⁷ in 1997 and "The Precarious Revolution: Unchanging Institutions and the Fate of Reform in Iran" in 2003, Kazemi identifies the IRI's Guardian Council as an impassable obstacle in front of the judicial and executive arms of the political system, which uses its veto power on several occasions. The Guardian Council judges the qualifications of election candidates with its twelve members and prevents an emergence of a countering elite to the regime holders. Since the Guardian Council's members are appointed by the Supreme Leader, their decisions comply with his individual will. William A. Samii²⁸ and Cyrus Masroori²⁹ also support this point of view in their articles.

Finally, the scholars of political economy argue that the government and military control of the Iranian economy prevent development of an economically independent middle class and coerce the Iranian society to obey the government's arbitrary rule

²⁵ Barbara Ann Rieffer-Flanagan, *Evolving Iran: An Introduction to Politics and Problems in the Islamic Republic* (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2013), 217.

²⁶ Farhad Kazemi, "The Precarious Revolution: Unchanging Institutions and the Fate of Reform in Iran," *Journal of International Affairs* 57, no. 1 (2003), 82.

²⁷ Farhad Kazemi, "The Iranian Enigma," *Current History* 96, no. 606 (1997), 40.

²⁸ A. William Samii, "Iran's Guardians Council as an Obstacle to Democracy," *The Middle East Journal* 55, no. 4 (Autumn 2001), 643.

²⁹ Cyrus Masroori, "The Conceptual Obstacles to Political Reform in Iran," *Review of Politics* 69, no. 2 (2007), 171.

through subsidies and high rates of public employment. Shayerah Ilias emphasizes the economic role of *bonyads* and economic control of the IRGC, which was founded as the true security force of the new regime in the early years of the revolution. He asserts that the IRGC controls all borders and trade routes as well as the telecommunications sector of the IRI.³⁰ The IRGC gives the incumbent government a strong ability to control all activities of opposition groups. Professor Robert Looney, who once served as an economic adviser to the last Iranian Shah, assesses the Iranian economy in a historical perspective and demonstrates its capacity and mismanagement by the post-revolutionary governments. He asserts that the state control of all economic sectors and subsidies causes a lack of private business and economic liberation.³¹ This economic structure diminishes the mobilizing resources and political opportunities for oppositional groups in Iran.

3. Optimistic Camp: A More Liberal Iran is Possible

The optimistic camp, which surprisingly includes Mr. Reza Pahlavi, the son of the last Iranian Shah, indirectly argues that the Student and Green Movements are changing Iranian society and influencing the IRI's domestic politics even if they cannot manage to make an institutional change in Iran. The scholars of this camp claim that the relative liberation of the IRI's domestic politics, with economic reform efforts after the end of Iran-Iraq war and during the reformist era under the presidency of the moderate cleric Muhammad Khatami, provided opportunities and relative free space for the re-establishment of opposition groups.³² Among these groups, students started the irreversible change in Iranian internal dynamics. The interpretation of political Islam, democracy, and human rights in Iran has changed. The growing number of educated young men and, especially, women seek their rights through social movements, and their number is growing. This new generation does not share the same ideas with the post-

³⁰ Shayerah Ilias, Iran's Economic Conditions: U.S. Policy Issues, *Congressional Research Service*, April 22, 2010, 15.

³¹ Robert Looney, "The Iranian Economy: The Glass Half Empty," Prosperity in Depth: Iran, *The 2012 Legatum Prosperity Index: Iran*, 141.

³² Ray Takeyh, "Iran at a Crossroads," *The Middle East Journal* 57, no. 1 (2003), 42.

revolutionary regime holders. The participation of several groups in the Green Movement is an accumulation of these ideas and people alienated from the Islamic Republic. The economic and political mismanagement of the IRI's government, along with state repression, provide political opportunities for this generation. The previous government's reaction to the Student Movement and the current violent repression of the Green Movement whose members have demanded their stolen political rights testify to the growing effects of social movements on Iranian domestic politics. The last allegedly fraudulent presidential election in 2009 also shows the weakness of the regime and its legitimacy.

Two theses, "Achieving the Unexpected: Social Change in Iran since 1963"³³ by Jenny Lo in 2010 and "Social Movements' Emergence and Form: The Green Movement in Iran"³⁴ by Afsanneh J. Haddadian in 2012, analyze the Student and Green Movements in Iran and provide examples of political opportunities, mobilizing resources, and frames. The former thesis focuses on the successes and failures of the Student and Green Movements by assessing their ability to gain their objectives and sustainability against William A. Gamson's "Outcome of Resolved Challenges"³⁵ framework. Lo finds the Student Movement unsuccessful and the Green Movement marginally successful but stresses their importance on social change in Iran. The latter thesis examines the emergence of the Green Movement by focusing on the effects of information communication technologies on collective action grassroots. Haddadian finds framing as the most important factor for the emergence of the Green Movement, but falls short of explaining the consequences of the Green Movement. Neither of these works looks at the direct or indirect political consequences.

While Lo and Haddadian analyze the Student and Green Movements with three components of social movement theory, "The Rhythmic Beat of the Revolution in Iran" by Michael M. J. Fischer points to Shi'a Islam's values, symbols, stories, and practices as

³³ Jenny Lo, "Achieving the Unexpected: Social Change in Iran since 1963" (Wesleyan University, 2010).

³⁴ Afsanneh J. Haddadian, "Social Movements' Emergence and Form: The Green Movement in Iran" (PhD diss., Wright State University, 2012).

³⁵ Lo, "Achieving the Unexpected," 36.

the repeating frames of Iranian social movements. He explains how the participants of the Green Movement place their martyrs next to the Shi'a Imam, Ali, in their fight against the injustice of the IRI's government.³⁶ He argues that the Green Movement demonstrates Iranians' insistence for more freedom and participation.

The literature about the 1999 Student Movement in the optimistic camp has several scholarly articles that provide information on how political opportunities first enabled students to build organizations and how the erosion of rights, with state repression, mobilized these organizations after the election of President Khatami. "The Revival of the Student Movement in Post-Revolutionary Iran" explains the importance of university campuses as a mobilizing resource and free space, the crucial role of students in social movements, and the re-creation of student organizations in the IRI after the long period of the "Islamization project."³⁷ Six years after this article, Ali Afshari and H. Graham Underwood support the same point of view and provide more information about student activism in Iran, up to the beginning of Ahmadinejad's presidency.³⁸

Scholars like Jahangir Amuzegar,³⁹ Ray Takeyh,⁴⁰ Said A. Arjomand,⁴¹ Ali Rezaei,⁴² and Arshin Adib-Monghaddam⁴³ analyze several dimensions of the Student Movement and Khatami period, and generally conclude that the Student Movement was the first strike of social dissent against the regime's legitimacy and arbitrary rule. Although it was suppressed by the state, and conservatives managed to replace a reformist in the presidency and later in the parliament, these movements unleashed the

³⁶ Michael M. J. Fischer, "The Rhythmic Beat of the Revolution in Iran," *Cultural Anthropology* 25, no. 3, (2010), 509.

³⁷ Mehrdad Mashayekhi, "The Revival of the Student Movement in Post-Revolutionary Iran," *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 15 (2001), 292.

³⁸ Ali Afshari and H. Graham Underwood, "Iran's Resilient Civil Society: The Student Movement's Struggle," *Journal of Democracy* 18, no. 4 (2007), 80.

³⁹ Jahangir Amuzegar, "Iran's Theocracy Under Siege," *Middle East Policy* 10, no. 1 (2003), 135.

⁴⁰ Takeyh, "Iran at a Crossroads."

⁴¹ Said A. Arjomand, "Civil Society and the Rule of Law in the Constitutional Politics of Iran Under Khatami," *Social Research* 67, no. 2 (2000), 283.

⁴² Ali Rezaei, "Last Efforts of Iranian's Reformists," *Middle East Report* 226 (2003), 40.

⁴³ Arshin Adib-Monghaddam, "The Pluralistic Momentum in Iran and the Future of the Reform Movement," *Third World Quarterly* 27, no. 4 (2006), 665.

pluralism among society and the ruling elite. The students became one of the reference points for ordinary Iranians to ask who to vote for and why. The Student Movement changed public opinion and political disclosures in the IRI.

Ali Gheissari and Vali Nasr indicate other aspects of the students, such as the growing number of educated youth, their problems, and new interpretations of Islam, in their two books. *Contemporary Iran: Economy, Society, Politics*,⁴⁴ edited by Ali Gheissari, examines several aspects of youth in Iran. The book is a good source with statistical data on the growing number of educated women in Iran. It shows their unemployment and political problems. Another problem of Iranian youth discussed in this book, addiction, demonstrates the inability of Islamic law and governance to solve moral problems in the IRI. Vali Nasr emphasizes the new interpretation of Islam in the Middle East. He suggests that many young Iranians advocate this new version of Islam that mixes Islam and Western ideas of freedom and modernity, which will defeat extremism in the future.⁴⁵

“Change of Human Rights Perspective in Iran” and “Support for Democracy in Iran,” the first systematic analysis of support for democracy in the IRI, strongly justify Vali Nasr’s argument. In the first article, Hassan Davoodifard presents the development of human rights, its global and Islamic interpretation, and signs of change in IRI.⁴⁶ Using data from two surveys done in 2005 and 2008, the second article argues that, while religiosity and old age negatively relates to democracy in the IRI, education, young age, and economic grievances indirectly promote democracy in Iran. Greater dissatisfaction with the regime increases the demand for democracy in Iran.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Ali Gheissari, ed., *Contemporary Iran: Economy, Society, Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

⁴⁵ Vali Nasr, *The Rise of Islamic Capitalism: Why the Muslim Middle Class is the Key to Defeating Extremism* (New York: Free Press, 2009), 201.

⁴⁶ Hassan Davoodifard and Jayum Anak Jawan, “Change of Human Rights Perspective in Iran,” *International Journal of Business and Social Science* 2, no. 7 (2011), 126.

⁴⁷ Gunes Murat Tezcur, Taghi Azadarmaki, Mehri Bahar and Hooshang Nayebi, “Support for Democracy in Iran,” *Political Research Quarterly* 65, no. 2 (2011), 232.

Finally, three books about the Green Movement, one occasional paper, and three individual articles about Iranian politics cover the Iranian 2009 election crisis, the causes of the Green Movement, its dynamics, its participants' demands, and the movement's results in depth. Gunes Murat Tezcur suggests that the 2009 election fraud and the Supreme Leader's partisan behavior on the side of Ahmadinejad proved "the failure of managed functionalism in Iran."⁴⁸ In summary, these resources argue that the huge numbers of different groups, even uniformed soldiers, involved in the Green Movement, and the continuance of peaceful protests against violent repression, demonstrate the Iranians' unity and commitment to liberation. The Islamic practices and rhetoric once again framed an Islamic identity with a modern vision. Internet and SMS texting became a means of free information sharing against government-manipulated media. The Green Movement did not, however, radicalize yet. It did not manage to change the 2009 election results and lost its intensity over time. It did, though, manage to put a huge question mark on the regime's legitimacy. Its presence, even in very small numbers, terrifies the regime holders.

D. OVERVIEW

Chapters II-IV analyze three major social movements in Iran and their outcomes, and summarizes how social movements in post-revolutionary Iran have affected the IRI by their outcomes, which has altered domestic politics and encouraged more liberal tendencies. Chapter II explains how the 1979 Iranian revolution and its outcomes planted the seeds of the new social movements, since the revolution was the beginning of the Iranian contemporary state structure and its long-lasting social, economic, and political problems. Chapter III explains how the seeds started to sprout within the Student Movement in 1999, during the reformist period in Iran after the Iran-Iraq War, and affected Iranian domestic politics and society irreversibly. Chapter IV analyzes the emergence of neoconservatives in Iran with President Ahmadinejad, and explains how the last social movement, the Green Movement in 2009, affected Iranian domestic politics. Last, the findings of each chapter are summarized in Chapter V.

⁴⁸ Gunes Murat Tezcur, "Iran's Presidential Election: The Failure of Managed Functionalism," *Insight Turkey* 11, no. 3 (2009), 13.

II. IRANIAN REVOLUTION AND SEEDS OF NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

The Iranian revolution in 1979 planted the seeds of new social movements in post-revolutionary Iran. At the very least, the revolution set the foundations on which future movements must operate. The protests against the Shah Muhammad Reza Pahlavi's monarchy were a successful revolutionary social movement, in which almost all existing social classes participated under the leadership of Shi'a clergy. When the Shah was deposed, Iranians demanded better economic conditions, more liberty, more political rights, and protection of their Islamic values, but the consequences of the revolution were different.

The Shi'a clergy, utilizing their leadership and maintaining it after the protests, dominated the fledgling Iranian government's institutions and founded a state for their own interests instead of the Iranians' collective wellbeing. The new regime was created as an Islamic Republic, a theocracy with semi-democratic institutions. By creation, the Islamic Republic of Iran was based on both divine and popular legitimacy. It had unelected and elected institutions, the former of which undermined the latter's affairs. Although the unelected body maintained this superiority over the elected part, popular legitimacy provided an opportunity for oppositional groups to demand change in this system, even as the unelected institutions rejected liberal reform efforts and ended the political participation of oppositional groups. The Shi'a clergy separated immediately after the revolution, and this division deepened especially after the death of Ayatollah Khomeini, offering a second opportunity to the opposition. Elections in Iran served as an occasional political opportunity for new oppositional groups, both by relaxing state repression and enabling institutional access. The new regime could not solve Iranians' economic problems, severely suppressed any opposition to Shi'a clergy, and caused erosion of many Iranians' rights. Under these problems and repression, new oppositional groups emerged including reformist clergy, intellectuals, youth, students, and women. The developmental policies of the new regime helped these groups to increase their organizational capabilities and links, even though the Iranian government banned formal

dissident political activism. Shi'a Islam, its daily practices, and its historical struggle for justice became a foremost frame for new social movements after the Iranian revolution, because the revolution created a new Islamic identity; the new regime integrated religion with governance, and Shi'a clergy forced an Islamization of society.

The new social movements in Iran, especially after the death of the revolution's charismatic leader and end of the Iran-Iraq war, started to utilize these opportunities. The Iranian revolution was not over, in the sense that the struggle of Iranians for a more liberal government and society was continuing. Even though the Shi'a clergy contained oppositional forces for nearly two decades in the post-revolutionary period, the new regime's state structure and policies were preparing the necessary conditions for those new oppositional forces.

A. THE REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT AND IRANIANS' DEMANDS

It is necessary to briefly look at how the revolution happened, how it succeeded against a strong monarchy with an intact security force, and what the protesters demanded to better understand why the revolution's consequences created new social movements in Iran. First and foremost, the protests between 1977 and 1979 in Iran were a "multi-class populist movement,"⁴⁹ which had grown with the help of Shi'a clergy and Iranian bazaaries' (i.e., merchants') mobilization capabilities, such as their autonomous organizational networks and resources⁵⁰ that brought masses of the people, from all strata of Iranian society, to the streets of Iranian cities. The social classes participating in the revolutionary protests were Shi'a clergy, bazaaries, university and seminary students, intellectuals, urban middle class, workers, women, poor from shantytowns, and even religious and ethnic minorities.⁵¹ The protests were a reaction to the last Shah's developmental policies that were threatening a majority of its population and creating a volatile political environment. Second, limited relaxation of state repression along with

⁴⁹ Berch Berberoglu, "The Class Nature of Religion and Religious Movements; A Critical Analysis of the Iranian Revolution of 1979," *Humanity & Society* 25, no. 3-4 (2001), 300.

⁵⁰ Benjamin Smith, "Collective Action with and without Islam," 188.

⁵¹ Ervand Abrahamian, "The Crowd in the Iranian Revolution," *Radical History Review* 105 (2009), 14.

international developments opened a little protest door, and then state repression, inconsistent concessions, and critical events expanded the protests.⁵² The Shah's security forces stayed intact and were able to crush the protesters during the events, but Iranians perceived their own opportunities; as Charles Kruzman noted in his article, "Iranians continued to recognize and fear the state's coercive powers. However, they felt that these powers were insignificant compared with the strength of revolutionary movement."⁵³ Finally, the revolutionary movement succeeded because of non-violent tactics and continuous protests, with the help of Shi'a Islam's forty-day mourning rituals that produced protest cycles whenever the state killed protesters. The Iranian state was paralyzed by general strikes, and the Shah's regime fell apart when unarmed people overcame the modern Iranian military with flowers.

Although the demands of protesters varied during the two years, the aim of the revolutionary movement was chanted as "independence, liberty, and Islamic republic."⁵⁴ The Iranians, as an end state, wanted to set up a new regime in order to achieve "political freedom, essential rights and political independence and in this way to establish Islam and Islamic cultural values in society and create an Islamic government so that there would not be poverty and economic deprivation"⁵⁵ due to their high dissatisfaction with the Shah's monarchic regime. However, the result would be much different even at the very beginning of the post-revolutionary period. As Mehdi Bazargan, the provisional Prime Minister of Iran, put it, "We were asking for rain instead we got flood ... What has the ruling elite done ... besides bringing death and destruction, packing the prisons and cemeteries in every city, creating long queues, shortage, high prices, unemployment,

⁵² Karen Rasler, "Concessions, Repression, and Political Protest in the Iranian Revolution," *American Sociological Review* 61, no. 1 (February 1996), 132.

⁵³ Charles Kurzman, "Structural Opportunity and Perceived Opportunity in Social Movement Theory: The Iranian Revolution of 1979," *American Sociological Review* 61, no. 1 (February 1996), 161.

⁵⁴ Farhad Khosrokhavar, "The Islamic Revolution in Iran: Retrospect after a Quarter of a Century," *Thesis Eleven* 76, no. 70 (2004), accessed July 24, 2013, <http://the.sagepub.com/content/76/1/70>, 71.

⁵⁵ Hamidreza Jalaeipour, "Iran's Islamic Revolution: Achievements and Failures," *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies* 15, no. 3 (2006), 210.

poverty, homeless people, repetitious slogans and a dark future?”⁵⁶ The situation has not improved much in the three decades since the revolution, but it has created new opportunities and threats for emerging dissident groups.

B. CREATION OF POLITICAL OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS FOR NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

The Iranian revolution changed the state structure of Iran from a constitutional monarchy to a theocracy with semi-democratic institutions, which was called an Islamic Republic. This new state structure was a system for clergy, as Farhad Kazemi has asserted: “Iranian politics is a system made by clerics for the clerics, and for their supporters who possess a near monopoly on the spoils of the revolution and the country’s resources.”⁵⁷ However, it has also produced political opportunities and threats for oppositional groups by its foundation of dual legitimacy that combined theocracy and democracy with a high degree of authoritarianism and economic problems. Fundamentally, the dual legitimacy and the elite conflict offered continuous opportunities in Iran, where elections served as an occasional political opportunity. State repression, state-attributed economic problems, and the erosion of rights were three other motives that would mobilize dissident groups against the regime.

1. Dual Legitimacy

The revolution provided the fundamental continuous opportunity for new social movements with its dual legitimacy, in which the revolutionary clergy based their position in the system on divine rule with the absence of the last Imam, and justified this claim by the popular demand of Iranians. Initially, at the end of March 1979, 97 percent of the Iranian electorate voted for an Islamic Republic that Ayatollah Khomeini proclaimed as an unprecedented referendum in Iranian history.⁵⁸ The provisional

⁵⁶ Mahmoud Kashefi, “Why the 1979 Iranian Revolution Did Not Bring an Advanced Mode of Production with a Representative and Reduced State Power? A Sociological Explanation,” *International Review of Modern Sociology* 34, no. 1 (Spring 2008), 76.

⁵⁷ Farhad Kazemi, “The Precarious Revolution,” 82.

⁵⁸ R. K. Ramazani, “Iran’s Revolution: Patterns, Problems, and Prospects,” *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 56, no. 3 (Summer 1980), 449.

government, however, could not provide a full democratic Islamic government to Iranians. Although the government promised a “Constituent Assembly,”⁵⁹ which would have been an elected body of representatives that could have provided a better opportunity for a representative public debate on the new constitution, an “Assembly of Experts”⁶⁰ was elected by a decree of Khomeini. The 75 elected members of the Assembly, who were the supporters of Khomeini, produced and approved the IRI’s constitution, which was ratified in a referendum on November 15, 1979 and amended in 1989. The Iranian constitution described the government with its first article, “Article 1: The form of government of Iran is that of an Islamic Republic, endorsed by the people of Iran on the basis of their long standing belief in the sovereignty of truth and Qur’anic justice.”⁶¹ Various groups opposed the procedural and substantive flaws of this process, but the new constitution created the Islamic Republic based on the concept of *wilayat al-faqih*.⁶²

While the constitution established an Islamic government and took its support from Iranians as described in Article 1, the IRI’s constitutional duality of theocracy and republicanism came from the concept of *wilayat al-faqih* and consists of elected and appointed institutions, as shown in Figure 1.

⁵⁹ R. K. Ramazani, “Iran’s Revolution: Patterns, Problems, and Prospects,” 450.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Barbara Ann Rieffer-Flanagan, *Evolving Iran*, 58.

⁶² Ibrahim Moussawi, *Shi’ism and the Democratization Process in Iran*, 7.

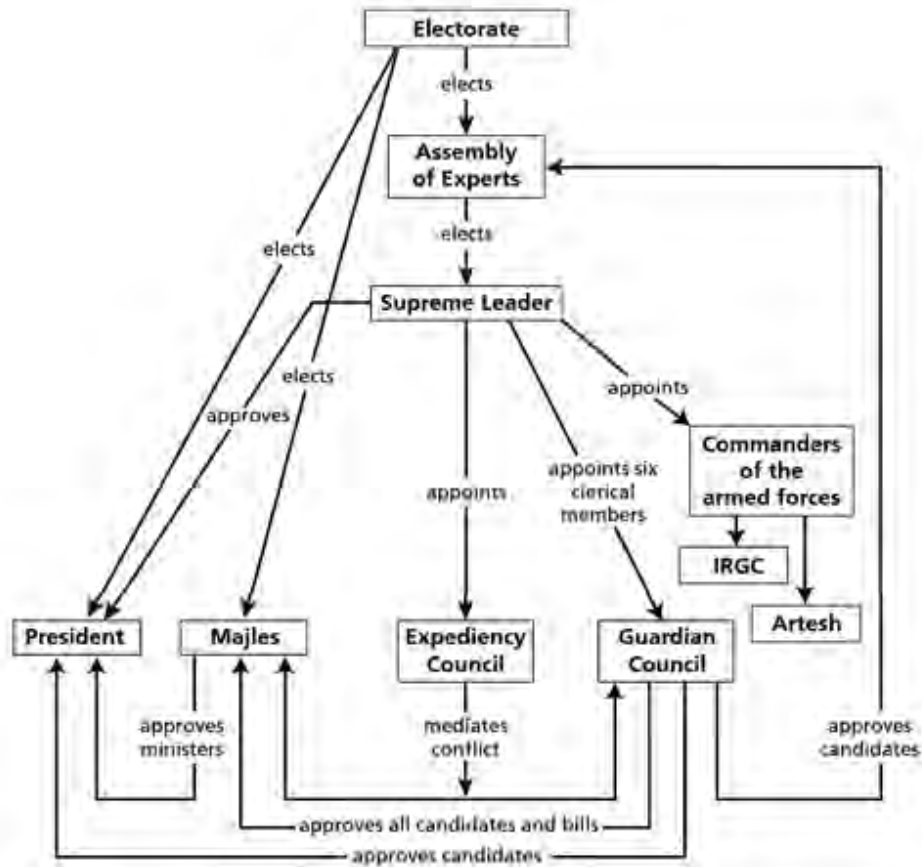


Figure 1. The IRI's Political System.⁶³

The Iranian constitution's Article 5 changed the nature of the Islamic democratic state to more of a theocracy by giving absolute right of rule to the religious leader or authorities by stating that, "during the occultation of the Lord of the age (May God hasten his renewed manifestation!) the governance and leadership of the nation devolve upon the just and pious *faqih* who is acquainted with the circumstances of his age; courageous, resourceful and administrative ability; and recognized and accepted by the majority of the people. In the event that no *faqih* should be so recognized by the majority, the leader or the leadership council, composed of *fuqaha* possessing the aforementioned qualifications will assume this responsibility in accordance with article 107."⁶⁴

⁶³ David E. Thaler et al., *Mullahs, Guards, and Bonyad*, 23.

⁶⁴ Riaz Hassan, "Iran's Islamic Revolutionaries: Before and After the Revolution," *Third World Quarterly* 6, no. 3 (July 1984), 682.

In this complex political system, the appointed institutions like Guardian Council and Expediency Council under the personal control of the Supreme Leader have challenged, undermined, and overridden the elected president and parliament (Majles) to secure the future of the regime and sustain their political and economic interests, instead of promoting better governance and equal distribution of wealth to Iranians. Since the Supreme Leader was the head of the system with his extensive authority to decide the general policies, supervise their execution, and ratify or appoint the top officials including the president as well as being the commander in chief,⁶⁵ he could easily deny the president's policies such as liberal reforms that would challenge his interests. In addition to the Supreme Leader's powerful role in undermining the popularly elected president, the Guardian Council which was the other most powerful body and an extension of the Supreme Leader's personal will, with its appointed members has continually obstructed the work of the elected members of the legislature body, the Majles. The Guardian Council's job, to ensure that all legislation is compatible with Islam, intensified the same legitimacy problem since the unelected and elected assemblies clashed often, especially on reform issues. The Council vetoed the laws developed in the Majles if the members of the council found them contrary to Shi'a Islam. The Guardian Council also supervised elections, vetted, and vetoed the candidates according to Article 99 of the Constitution. The creation of the Guardian Council in Iranian politics dated back to the constitutional period, with the idea of safeguarding "the Islamic ordinance and the constitution,"⁶⁶ its de-facto control, however, began with the Islamic Republic.

Contrary to the general argument of many scholars that saw this unelected body of the Iranian political system as an impenetrable obstacle for more liberal democratic politics, the undermining of elected institutions and unjust affairs of these institutions started to damage the Iranian state's divine legitimacy in the minds and hearts of the Iranian public. The state oppression and rigidity against any other group and different ideas left one way to challenge the regime holders' arbitrary rule by utilizing the popular legitimacy of the political system.

⁶⁵ David E. Thaler et al., *Mullahs, Guards, and Bonyads*, 25.

⁶⁶ Barbara Ann Rieffer-Flanagan, *Evolving Iran*, 65.

2. Division of the Elite

The Iranian new elite dominated all institutions of the system and suppressed other revolutionary groups for nearly two decades, beginning from the early years of the revolution and during the Iran-Iraq war; several divisions, however, occurred among them mainly between conservatives and reformers. The second opportunity for new social movements in Iran, the post-revolutionary elite conflict, occurred first when different power centers emerged after the revolution. The initial polarization started “around the nature of the Islamic state”⁶⁷ and later continued on the development and reform issues related to the economic problems. The major political power centers in the early months of the post-revolution period were “the Provisional Revolutionary Government led by Mehdi Bazargan, the Revolutionary Council appointed by Ayatollah Khomeini, the *Komitehs and Shawras*, the Islamic Revolutionary Guards (*Pasdaran*), the Islamic Courts, and the Mujahedin-i Khalq.”⁶⁸ Although the provisional government was responsible for reconstruction of the state and was led by the National Front, including devout religious figures like Ayatollah Talegani and their supporters from among Western-educated intellectuals and technocrats, the traditional clerics and Ulema dominated the Revolutionary Council, *Komitehs* and *Shawras* at the national and regional levels, and with the support of the Revolutionary Guards. The former group wanted to build a modern Islamic government compatible with democracy, which would forge a modern society, but the latter group saw their position and ideas as “antithetical to the objectives of the revolution.”⁶⁹ The constitution gave absolute power to traditional clergy by designating, implicitly, Ayatollah Khomeini as the Supreme Leader with its Article 107.⁷⁰ Soon after, the conservative clergy showed its first willingness to wield power when the Supreme Leader dismissed the first elected President, Dr. Abdul Hassan Bani Sadr, who was a member of the pre-revolution liberation movement.

⁶⁷ Riaz Hassan, “Iran’s Islamic Revolutionaries: Before and After the Revolution,” 676.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 677.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 679.

⁷⁰ Eric Hogg and William Royce, “The Shi’i Clergy of Iran the Conception of an Islamic State,” *State, Culture, and Society* 1, no. 3 (Spring 1985), 107.

3. Elections

Elections in Iran after the revolution became an occasional political opportunity for relaxing state repression and enabling institutional access for opposition groups, through reformist clergy, to change the system to more liberal ways. The Islamic Republic, on the other hand, has seen the elections as justification of the legitimacy of the regime from the first referendum on. In Article 6, the constitution states, “In the Islamic Republic of Iran, the affairs of the country must be administered on the basis of public opinion expressed by the means of elections, including the election of President, the representatives of the Islamic Consultative Assembly, and the members of councils.”⁷¹ The increased public participation in elections has justified both the legitimacy of the Islamic government and the strength of the revolution for conservatives. Although the Guardian Council qualified or vetoed all candidates, the Iranian regime relaxed state repression during election periods, thus providing a limited free space for political discussions in front of the public. The elections also provided institutional access for only reformist clergy because of their revolutionary and Islamic credentials to change the system in more liberal ways.

4. Threats

While the new Islamic regime was producing political opportunities for oppositional groups on the one hand, it also created threats such as state repression, state-attributed economic problems, and the erosion of rights that mobilize Iranians to protest. State repression was pervasive in the new regime’s policies to sustain the Islamic character of the revolution. The new regime could not solve the economic problems as the clergy had promised before the revolution but, rather, increased them because of the devastating effects of war and mismanagement of the economy. Many Iranians such as secular technocrats, intellectuals, women, and even liberal-minded religious clergy lost their rights.

⁷¹ Barbara Ann Rieffer-Flanagan, *Evolving Iran*, 83.

a. State Repression

The new regime did not hesitate to destroy other revolutionary groups, and continued state repression from the beginning of its creation to secure and sustain the Islamic character of the revolution and the new regime. The first three years of the post-revolution period were bloody. At least 10,000 people were killed during the political struggles.⁷² Although major organized participants of the revolution such as the “Movement for the Liberation of Iran,”⁷³ Tudeh party, and radical organizations like “the Cherkha-yi Fedayi Khalq (The People’s Devoted Guerillas) and the Sazman-i Mujahidin-i Khalq (The Organization of the People’s Fighters)”⁷⁴ contributed to the struggle against the Shah, these forces became a threat to the conservative clergy. Especially, the activities of Sazman-i Mujahidin-i Khalq, including bombings and assassinations that killed many political leaders of the new regime, testified to this threat and justified the use of force against these organizations. Khomeini unleashed the Revolutionary Guards and *Komitehs*, with their arsenal that had been taken from the Shah’s security forces, to destroy the new regime’s rivals. Moreover, there were individuals among the Shi’a clergy who challenged the leadership of Khomeini. For example, Ayatollah Shariat-Madari was Khomeini’s strongest rival with his religious credentials and popularity among Shi’a clergy.⁷⁵ Khomeini and his supporters silenced them, either by discrediting them or putting them under house arrest. Eventually, between November 1979 and April 1983, the conservative clergy brutally destroyed all its organized and individual opponents.⁷⁶ This state repression continued by imprisoning any secular or liberal opposition to the theocratic regime. Political freedom, freedom of speech, and freedom of the press and association only worked in favor of conservative clergy and their lay supporters.

⁷² Hamidreza Jalaeipour, “Iran’s Islamic Revolution: Achievements and Failures,” 210.

⁷³ Ervand Abrahamian, “The Opposition Forces,” *MERIP Reports* 75/76 (March-April 1979), 5.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Eric Høglund and William Royce, “The Shi’i Clergy of Iran,” 112.

⁷⁶ Said Amir Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown: The Islamic Revolution in Iran* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 154.

b. State-Attributed Economic Problems

In addition to political struggles, the new elite of the Islamic Republic also confronted old economic problems of the Shah's time that were rooted in the 1973 oil-boom's economic and financial mess. The revolutionary period also added "loss of management and capital, labor radicalism, bankruptcies, and shortages of raw materials"⁷⁷ to previous problems. The economic problem was urgent, with more than two million unemployed in Iran immediately after the revolution.⁷⁸ To solve these problems, Ayatollah Khomeini and his supporters ran the economy in a way that shifted its priorities from economic growth to social and economic justice, and economic policy turned in anti-market, anti-capitalist, and anti-globalist directions.⁷⁹ Although personal income has increased by half since 1980, the Islamic Republic created its economic structures related to revolutionary ideology and Islamic rules of social justice. The country's new constitution led the government to reduce poverty, to ban usury and extravagance, to aim for self-sufficiency in food production, and to prevent foreign economic domination, especially in the oil industry. The government nationalized major industries, private banks, and insurance companies. Thousands of businesses belonging to the Shah and his supporters were turned over to Islamic charitable foundations, "bonyads." Moreover, Ayatollah Khomeini founded the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) to defend the new regime, providing welfare and small loans to veterans and their families during the 1980–88 Iran-Iraq war. The economic consequences of the war years were severe, not only because of the destruction but also because of huge nationalization, migration of middle-class Iranians, and the decline in international oil prices. Per capita GDP and capital formation declined by one third, and inflation accelerated to nearly 20 percent between 1980 and 1988.⁸⁰ State-attributed economic problems continued but have never been solved in Iran.

⁷⁷ Vahe Petrossian, "Dilemmas of the Iranian Revolution," *The World Today* 36, no. 1 (1980), 25.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Robert Looney, "The Iranian Economy: The Glass Half Empty," *Prosperity in Depth: Iran, The 2012 Legatum Prosperity Index™* Ranking: Iran 107.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 142.

c. Erosion of Rights

Many Iranians, such as secular technocrats, intellectuals, women, and even liberal-minded religious clergy, lost their rights rather than gaining more liberties. Every type of human rights violation had been widespread in Iran before the revolution. The Shah prohibited self-expression and political participation. Press censorship climbed to the level where no newspapers, magazines, or other publications was printed within the country if contained even the slightest government criticism.⁸¹ The Iranian Army and SAVAK's arrests, detentions, torture, and murders had become severe; even the Shah's laws, which gave extensive authority to SAVAK to deal with anti-regime activities just before the revolution, were draconian. The new regime did little to significantly improve human rights. Human rights violations continued, both because of "perceived threats to [the] regime and a specific interpretation of Islam."⁸² As noted earlier, the first victims of these violations were secular and liberal intellectuals, upon the excuse of their threats to the regime. Their few rights were eroded completely compared to the monarchic regime's standards. Although the new regime ensured the Iranians' rights extensively, ranging from equal rights for every citizen, protection of the law for every individual, freedom to gather publicly, and even the right of executing street marches in accordance with the articles from 19 to 42 in the IRI's constitution, it limited them by insisting that they comply with Islamic principles.⁸³ So, women became the second losers because Islamic law never considers women equal to men. In addition to Islamic principles, the conditions of some rights, such as freedom of the press and freedom of speech, complied with the basis of Islamic government, which jeopardized even the Shi'a clergy's rights if they would criticize the Islamic government and the regime holders would see them as a threat. Numerous incidents occurred in Iran that would initiate protests because of the erosion of rights.

⁸¹ Ahmad Farougy, "Repression in Iran," *Index on Censorship* 3, no. 4 (1974), 15.

⁸² Barbara Ann Rieffer-Flanagan, *Evolving Iran*, 115.

⁸³ Islamic Republic of Iran Constitution, Part 3-The Rights of the People, accessed October 9, 2013, <http://www.iranonline.com/iran/iran-info/government/constitution-3.html>.

C. POST-REVOLUTIONARY MOBILIZING STRUCTURES AND RESOURCES

Under this state oppression, new oppositional groups emerged, such as the reformist elite, intellectuals, youth, students, and women. First, the reformist elite separated from the conservative clergy and became the natural leader of oppositional groups, since they appealed to intellectuals, youth, and women with their political position in the absence of party politics and where the Shi'a clerics were, as Ayatollah Rafsanjani has said, the "main guiding force for political activity in the country."⁸⁴ They were the only leaders who could participate in political competition. Both religious and secular intellectuals were the second opposition group in post-revolutionary Iranian society, with their role in opening up cultural domains and pushing modernization and liberation by both their reinterpretation of Shi'a Islam and showing other fields of intellectual life where religion could not claim supremacy. The number of publications increased. With the high population growth rate of Iran, a new generation of youth emerged. These young Iranians, both boys and girls, were far removed from revolutionary ideology and more educated than their elders, due to the new regime's developmental policies on education. They suffered under the new regime's self-inflicted economic problems and repression more than they would have during the Shah's regime. They became more politically active, first in schools with student organizations, and later continued this activism in their lives through their informal links and loose organizations. Student organizations that were formerly built by the new regime to support the Islamization of education and society turned to opposition organizations in the freer environment of universities. Art associations, student trade unions, and political student organizations emerged on Iranian campuses. Women's solidarity networks and non-governmental organizations also were founded and contributed to the social mobilization. The Islamic government's infrastructural developments both changed the face of urban centers to more modern places and helped these groups' communication and organizational capabilities by extending electricity, telephone, roads, and other available

⁸⁴ Reza Razavi, "The Road to Party Politics in Iran: 1979-2009," 85.

technological means, such as TV, Internet, and social media, even in remote areas of the country.

1. Reformist Elite

The post-revolutionary elite conflict during the first years of the Islamic Republic deepened and varied over two decades in Iran, and the reformist clergy became the vanguard of social movements, since they promoted a more moderate and inclusive rule with redistributive economic policies, and the political system did not allow any outsider institutional access. As a result of the post-revolutionary political power struggle and intra-elite conflict which caused the closure of the country's last political party, the Islamic Republic Party, in May 1987,⁸⁵ the revolutionary elite divided into three major factions, especially after the death of Khomeini. There were traditional conservatives, pragmatist conservatives or the pragmatic right and reformers.⁸⁶ These factions used mosques, seminaries, and their informal links, such as economic or intellectual relations, to encourage political participation in a way other than formal political parties although the IRI's constitution allowed the formation of political parties. This was as a result of the lack of development of party politics in Iran after the regime change. Whereas traditional and pragmatic conservatives preferred a protective policy on *wilayat al-faqih* with populist and protectionist or to some extent market-oriented economic policies, the reformist elite sought to moderate clerical rule by strengthening civil institutions. Their policy position was more liberal and inclusive, with redistributive economic tendencies. Thus, Iranian intellectuals, youth, women, and even minority groups started to support the reformist faction. Moreover, the reformist clergy were the only political leaders who could pass the strict qualifications of the Guardian Council. The reformist elite's religious credentials and revolutionary commitment helped them to compete in the elections as presidential and representative candidates.

⁸⁵ Said Amir Arjomand, *After Khomeini: Iran under His Successors* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 65.

⁸⁶ Keith Crane, Rollie Lal, and Jeffrey Martini, *Iran's Political, Demographic, and Economic Vulnerabilities* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2008), 21.

2. Intellectuals

Iranian intellectuals played a crucial role in the emergence of new opposition groups, by opening up their cultural domains and pushing modernization and liberation. Religious intellectuals were the frontrunners of the new ideas that would undermine the foundations of the divine legitimacy of theocracy.⁸⁷ The reinterpretation of Shi'a Islam on "theology, jurisprudence, clerical institutions, and the fusion of religion and state"⁸⁸ came from both within and outside the Islamic government's formal establishment. For example, Muhammad Khatami, who was also in the leadership of new social movements and Adbolkarim Soroush were the members of the first parliament. Iranian secular intellectuals also contributed to the opening of society by showing other fields of intellectual life where religion could not claim supremacy such as cinema, theatre, painting, novel writing, and poetry. The number of publications increased with the efforts of intellectuals. Many works of those intellectuals won prizes in European festivals or Western awards. The themes of Iranian cinema were not religious, or at least religious figures were acting with non-religious goals.⁸⁹ The religious intellectuals tried to secularize the religion and to widen the scope of human intervention in politics, challenging the idea of conservatives that they only suggested and took "an intangible political order ordained by God."⁹⁰ Secular intellectuals showed that religion was only another activity among other kinds of cultural activities.

3. Youth

The Iranian population growth rate created an expansion in the younger segment of the population, which did not experience the pre-revolutionary period but suffered from the economic problems and state repression of the new regime. The younger generation was educated by the new regime's developmental policies on education. The new generation's main concerns were living a life without the restrictions of Islamic law,

⁸⁷ Farhad Khosrokhavar, "The Islamic Revolution in Iran," 77.

⁸⁸ Asef Bayat, *Making Islam Democratic: Social Movements and the Post-Islamist Turn* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 84.

⁸⁹ Farhad Khosrokhavar, "The Islamic Revolution in Iran," 79.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

achieving personal economic and social goals, having free formal relations with the opposite sex, consuming without guilt the developing world's modern goods, and the like, rather than advocating the old revolutionary ideology and its forced daily Islamization.⁹¹ The new regime in Iran both increased the number of schools and students. With the compulsory usage of the scarf by women and girls, and the segregation of boys and girls in education, Iranian girls were allowed to go to school. The new generation first became more politically active in these schools with student organizations. Among the youth, students were the most affected by and aware of the Iranian problems since they were educated in an environment where they were influenced by the new intellectuals. Women, as a part of the student group, became the other foot soldiers of the social movements along with their separate struggle to gain their lost civil rights and overcome inequality. The more women were educated, the more they realized the inequality between female and male in Iranian society.

4. Mobilizing Resources

While a new generation was getting educated, the Islamic Republic's developmental policies started to provide necessary resources for mobilizing structures, such as communication means, and modern and free spaces where groups could meet and interact with one another. Beginning with the Iran-Iraq War years, Iranian infrastructure had started to improve, at first, to provide the necessary communication and supply routes of war. After the war, the Iranian urban centers were in crisis since they were overgrown, overpopulated, polluted, unregulated, and mismanaged during the war years. Beginning in the early 1990s, the Islamic government began to reconstruct the country. The urban centers gradually changed into more modern cities where freeways, shopping malls, and commercial billboards began to appear like in Western cities. Parks, sport centers, concert halls, and recreational places emerged in cities beginning with Tehran.⁹² Telephone, television, Internet access, and other technological devices such as cellphones and, more recently, smart phones or tablets were becoming available for purchase in Iran.

⁹¹ Farhad Khosrokhavar, "The Islamic Revolution in Iran," 76.

⁹² Asef Bayat, *Making Islam Democratic*, 56.

Although the Islamic government strictly controlled these urban spaces, censored the press and visual media, and blocked Internet access, Iranians found ways to bypass them. These developments became the sources of mobilization both for organizational and communication means.

D. POLITICALIZED SHI'A ISLAM AS A CENTRAL FRAME

Shi'a Islam, its daily practices, and its historical struggle for justice became a primary frame for new social movements in Iran. The Iranian revolution itself created a new social movement's frame with its revolutionary Islamic identity, the integration of religion into governance, and the Shi'a clergy's Islamization project for society.

One of the slogans on the walls during the Iranian revolution was "Marx, if only you were alive, you would see that religion is not the opium of the people."⁹³ Although Shi'a Islam does not directly advocate rebellion against the rulers, its founding origins, which started the Shi'a-Sunni split in Islam, justified a meaningful struggle against tyranny and injustice. Three factors made the Shi'a Islam nested within the Iranian nationalism and socialism frame the revolutionary movement and created the revolutionary identity during the revolution. First, Iranians had perceived a tremendous threat to their indigenous values. The Shah had been forcefully secularizing the society and threatening his intellectually unprepared subjects' religious values. Second, as noted earlier, religious spaces like mosques and seminaries had been the most prevalent places to organize and disseminate the slogans of the revolutionaries. Last, the stories, symbols, and rituals of Shi'a Islam justified a meaningful struggle against tyranny and injustice in Iranian culture. The myth of martyrdom in Shi'a Islam, the martyrdom of Hussein and all his male next of kin by Sunni caliph Yazid, was a potent theme that demonstrated corrupt and oppressive tyranny. This myth was and still is central to everyday life in Iran.⁹⁴

When Shia clergy built the new regime based on *wilayat al faqih*, the Shi'a Islam religion became a part of the government and opened political discussions on what is true

⁹³ Ervand Abrahamian, "The Crowd in the Iranian Revolution," 24.

⁹⁴ Jill Diane Swenson, "Martyrdom: Mytho-Cathexis and the Mobilization of the Masses in the Iranian Revolution," *Ethos* 13, no. 2 (1985), 122.

or not according to Shi'a Islamic principles by individual reasoning. Although the Shi'a clerical establishment in Iran dates back to the Safavid Empire, which established Shi'a Islam as the government's official ideology, Shi'ism was not politicized and institutionalized to its current extent in Iran before the revolution. The clergy had gained political, social, and economic privileges before, and Iranian Shahs had coordinated government policies with clergy and safeguarded Shi'a Islam to gain legitimacy for centuries;⁹⁵ the clergy, however, had never become a part of the government. Instead, Shi'a clerics stayed mainly independent and alongside the state authority. The politicization of Shi'a Islam started especially with the ideas of Sayyed Jalal Al-e Ahmad and Ali Shari'ati, who created a religious and national stance by defining the former situation in Iran as "Westoxification"⁹⁶ and later transforming Islam into an ideology that could rise up against the injustices of the Pahlavi Shahs.⁹⁷ While their ideas were becoming popular among pre-revolutionary intellectuals and seminary students, Khomeini built his concept of *wilayat al-faqih* with a revolutionary resistance to an unjust Shah. It was the foundation of the Islamic Republic that formally politicized Shi'a Islam and integrated it into governance. The more the government used Shi'a Islamic principles and laws to rule Iran and solve Iranians' contemporary problems, the more it became an open arena for political discussions. The faults of the government and mismanagement or unequal distribution of resources can be easily matched with injustice and delegitimize the new rulers.

The conservative clergy who built the Islamic government and politicized Shi'a Islam did not stop at the state level but started a cultural revolution in Iran in order to clean away the remnants of the Shah's secularization; it was this effort that would backfire. From governmental institutions to Iranians' clothes, the revolutionaries dictated Islamic principles and forced them on society. For example, universities in Iran closed in 1980, and their curriculum was rearranged according to Islamic standards between 1980

⁹⁵ Mehdi Khalaji, "Iran's Regime of Religion," *Journal of International Affairs* 65, no. 1 (2011), 131.

⁹⁶ Said Amir Arjomand, *After Khomeini*, 73.

⁹⁷ Evaleila Pesaran, "Towards an Anti-Western Stance: The Economic Discourse of Iran's 1979 Revolution," *Iranian Studies* 45, no. 5 (2008), 698.

and 1983.⁹⁸ “Workplaces, factories, banks and hospitals became sites of moral prescription; sex segregation and daily collective prayers were imposed by law and enforced by hard-line Islamic associations.”⁹⁹ Revolutionary posters and slogans decorated all streets. Citizens were even reminded of their religious duties and the new social order by loudspeakers. The Islamization project was forced on all social life in Iran to build an Islamic identity but, as noted earlier, this forced Islamization was accepted with different interpretations, if not totally reversed. The new generation took Shi’a Islam with their individual world views. Although Islamization was enforced in Iran, however, religiosity declined, drug use increased, and prostitution skyrocketed in the late 1990s. Since the government’s strict control continued on Islamic daily practices, new social movements could not show their resistance by wearing Western style clothes or totally rejecting Islamization. Rather, they found innovative ways to challenge the regime holders by using the revolutionary period’s tactics, such as using the same protest methods.

E. CONCLUSION

The Iranian Revolution in 1979 was the starting point of new social movements in Iran. The IRI’s dual legitimacy, division among the revolutionary elite, and elections provided continuous and occasional opportunities through the foundation of the new regimes’ complex political system. The Islamic government’s authoritarianism and economic problems that created state repression, state-attributed economic problems, and the erosion of rights also became motivation for opposition groups to start protests. Given their privileged position as the only group to have institutional access and their political status, the reformist clergy became the vanguard and only hope for opposition groups in Iran. New intellectuals, youth, students, and women composed the participants of these social movements. They utilized their informal linkages and informal organizations in lieu of political parties and very limited formal opposition organizations in Iran. The Iranian government’s developmental policies and progress provided new resources for

⁹⁸ Mehrdad Mashayekhi, “The Revival of the Student Movement,” 288.

⁹⁹ Asef Bayat, *Making Islam Democratic*, 56.

these mobilizing groups. Shi'a Islam as an integral part of the government became an open area of debate. Its forced daily religious practices in society framed the social movements. The Iranian students allying with the reformist elite were the first ones who used the seeds of the new social movements in Iran. Their struggle did not end but grew, and the Green Movement happened as the last collective effort of Iranians to liberalize Iran by utilizing the same opportunities and frames, in different ways.

III. THE STUDENT MOVEMENT AND AN IRREVERSIBLE CHANGE

After the Iranian revolution and absence of political opposition activism for nearly two decades, the Student Movement in 1999 was the first episode of new social movements that would become an important way to change the IRI's regime to more liberal ways. Although the movement was unsuccessful since it did not achieve an institutional change and was suppressed immediately, students became a "focal point of Iran's political developments,"¹⁰⁰ as one newspaper put it. Although their demands and links to Iranian society were limited at the time of protests, the Iranian students demonstrated their potential to become a potent force for future pro-democracy movements. In addition, the movement carried the political discussions in front of the public and uncovered the liberal tendencies of Iranian society. When the IRI's government severely attacked the students, the Islamic regime started to lose its legitimacy.

The Student Movement began when the reformist elite utilized the Iranian political system's various opportunities. The presidential election in 1997 was the occasional opportunity of the political system through which students, along with Iranian intellectuals, women, poor, and even minorities, supported the reformist elite and won a decisive victory against the conservative ruling elite. The division among the Iranian ruling elite had deepened significantly due to several factors, especially after the death of the charismatic leader of the revolution. A religiously unqualified and weak successor, Khamenei, became the Supreme Leader with extended powers, but President Rafsanjani's reforms strengthened possible opposition groups by economic means that would signal possible changes in the system. After the election, the reformist president Khatami united a coalition of reform-minded administrators and challenged the divine legitimacy of the IRI. His policies relaxed state repression to some extent and encouraged the press and civil organizations to be more active in domestic politics. However, his reform efforts were curtailed by the conservative clergy, who controlled the IRI's appointed institutions

¹⁰⁰ Mehrdad Mashayekhi, "The Revival of the Student Movement," 284.

and judiciary. While state-attributed economic problems were still in place and state repression undermined reform efforts, the Iranian security forces' severe violence against protesters and demonstrators brought high numbers of students to the streets. Students were among the growing number of Iranian youth mobilized in the universities, where they could freely discuss the problems of the state and society. The reemergence of student organizations at Iranian universities enabled students to start protests, while the Iranian universities' relatively free arena and student organization links helped students to organize. New intellectuals' ideas framed their activism as they appealed and influenced the world views of students after the period of the Islamization project. Growing ideas of personal liberties and freedom within the ideological framework of Shi'a Islam framed the Student Movement.

Although the students supported the reformist elite, who gained extensive institutional access between 1997 and 2004, they could not gain their rulers' support when state security forces attacked students in universities. The students' demands for change did not reach the other social classes in Iran at first, either. Their unity and their movement's efficacy waned, but students continued their struggle for a more liberal Iran, both in their future lives and in universities. They would be among the foot soldiers for Iranian pro-democracy movements.

A. THE STUDENT MOVEMENT IN 1999 AND ITS DEMANDS

The Student Movement in 1999 was a civil collective reaction against Iranian state repression and brutality on freedom of speech and assembly. The first signs of this movement emerged during President Khatami's campaign, in which Iranian students effectively participated between February and May 1997. However, the huge mobilization of students in Tehran, Tabriz, and fourteen other Iranian cities beginning on July 7, 1999, when they protested the closure of the daily *Salaam* magazine, marked the movement's national and international recognition.¹⁰¹ The protest started with the peaceful gathering of 200 hundred students in Tehran on the evening of July 7 to support freedom of speech, but they were injured, and at least five students were killed by formal

¹⁰¹Mehrdad Mashayekhi, "The Revival of the Student Movement," 283.

security and informal “semi-clandestine pressure groups.”¹⁰² The protests grew and continued over the next six days with the participation of thousands of students who employed various protest methods ranging from street marches or violent street clashes against security forces to peaceful sit-ins. The IRI’s government deployed its security forces and anti-riot police, as well as volunteer militias, and mercilessly suppressed the protests. Finally, the protests ended on July 13. More than 1,500 students were arrested during the protests and 17 students were still in prison even two years later.

The student demands changed during the protests and stayed limited. Their initial protest was against the closure of *Salaam* and about the press law. After the attack by security forces and militias, the student demands turned to “the return of victim's bodies, removal of the head of security forces, identification and punishment of plain clothed individuals (militias) involved in the raid, the accountability for the attack by the Leader, an apology to students for insults they were subjected to during the raid, medical and psychological attention for the injured, compensation for damages, and so on.”¹⁰³ The IRI government was slow to respond to these demands. Students grew more frustrated, and their slogans turned more critical and radical with inconsistent demands. They even protested the new Supreme Leader for the first time as, “Khomeinei! Shame on you; leadership is not for you” and “Incompetent leader of the time, is the true cause of this crime.”¹⁰⁴

B. POLITICAL OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS

The built-in handicaps of the IRI’s political system started to work for the Student movement on the behalf of new social movements. Elections, both presidential and parliamentary, were occasional opportunities that handed the elected institutions’ powers to the reformist elite, with a high percentage of popular support to change the system to more liberal ways. The division among the elite served as a catalyst for this victory as the

¹⁰² Mehrdad Mashayekhi, “The Revival of the Student Movement,” 284.

¹⁰³ Ali Akbar Mahdi, “The Student Movement in the Islamic Republic of Iran,” *Journal of Iranian Research and Analysis* 15, no. 2 (November, 1999), accessed November 25, 2013, <http://go.owu.edu/~aamahdi/students.htm>, 6-6.

¹⁰⁴ Jenny Lo, “Achieving the Unexpected,” 100.

traditional and pragmatic ruling elite depleted their credits in society. The economic reform efforts of the pragmatic faction also strengthened reform-minded technocrats and politicians. Building a coalition from these reformist groups and the support of the Iranian electorate, President Khatami challenged the divine legitimacy by promoting rule of law in Iran. The state repression relaxed for a limited time. However, the unelected institutions of the system and judiciary under the control of conservatives curtailed reform efforts. While economic problems were continuing, the state violence inspired huge numbers of students to protest.

1. Elections

In 1997, Iranian presidential elections for the first time handed over the most powerful elected institution of the Iranian political system, the presidency, to the reformist elite, with a strong popular legitimacy. The Iranians elected Muhammad Khatami, a previously little-known, middle-rank clergy member but a reformist, instead of the conservatives' candidate, Nateq-Nouri, who was the speaker of the Majles, with 69 percent of the votes.¹⁰⁵ His landslide victory was a testimony to Iranians', especially young Iranians', demand for change since his campaign had stressed populism, economic growth, accountable government, rule of law, and the respect for civil rights that would develop a better society in Iran. Iranians believed in his sincerity and even strengthened him by electing 189 out of 290 Majles seats from the reformists' candidates, giving 65 percent of the parliamentary seats to his support.¹⁰⁶ Although information about his constituency's voting patterns was scarce, the majority of his constituency was from Iranian reformist intellectuals, youth, students, women, and town dwellers, as well as minorities.¹⁰⁷

The Iranian electorate had turned their backs on traditional and pragmatic conservatives because of two decades of disillusionment on proposed justice, equality, and better economic conditions. The government tried to solve the economic problems

¹⁰⁵ Anoushiravan Ehteshami and Mahjoob Zweiri, *Iran and the Rise of its Neoconservatives: The Politics of Tehran's Silent Revolution* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2007), 5.

¹⁰⁶ Jenny Lo, "Achieving the Unexpected," 101.

¹⁰⁷ Farhad Kazemi, "The Precarious Revolution," 90.

but managed nothing and did not act justly and fairly. After the death of Khomeini, the conservative clergy under the coalition of the new Supreme Leader Khamenei and pragmatist President Rafsanjani tried, between 1989 and 1997, to solve some of the problems of the long war years, but these efforts were insufficient. The Iranian ruling elite's best excuse for delayed economic recovery and change, the Iran-Iraq war, had ended. Since the economic problems were the most critical ones undermining the revolutionary power structure by affecting its social base such as the *bazaaries* and lower classes, President Rafsanjani's administration initiated economic reforms."¹⁰⁸ "A developmental approach within the framework of revolution"¹⁰⁹ was necessary to change the revolutionary rhetoric and policies. Rafsanjani proposed reconstruction of the Iranian economy with "an aggressive monetary policy, an increased external debt, an increase in imports, an extensive privatization program, investment in infrastructure, introduction of free trade zones, deregulation of foreign exchange, attraction of expatriate entrepreneurial talents, investments, institutional reform, and introduction of development planning."¹¹⁰ His five-year development projects, however, did not cure the economic problems of society at all. On the contrary, Iran's international debt grew; the inflation rate increased from 19 percent in 1989 to 40 percent in 1993 and stayed high; planned privatization turned to corruption that handed public sector industries to state-controlled foundations or cronies of the ruling elite. The government also increased taxation opposite to a rentier state's character, which would lessen its ability to resist political opposition from society. For example, Iran's tax revenues increased from 986 billion Rials in 1989 to 3,180 billion in 1994.¹¹¹ In addition, the government had to cut its populist programs such as government subsidies. Price controls and market regulations were implemented and led to protests in Tehran, Mashad, and Qazvin. The government changed reform policy with a gradual approach to diminish the negative effects of economic development on the poor, and could not meet their planned goals. The unemployment problem was not solved and

¹⁰⁸ Ali Gheissari and Vali Nasr, *Democracy in Iran*, 113.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 119.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ali Gheissari and Vali Nasr, *Democracy in Iran*, 120.

stayed high. Although economic problems were not the total reason for political dissent, the main reason most Iranians cited was primarily the economy, and politics later.¹¹²

2. Division of Elite

The early split in the post-revolutionary elite, which deepened after the Iran-Iraq war years and the death of Khomeini, was another factor that contributed to the reformist elite's election victory. Division among the elite signaled the possibility of change to opposition groups. As explained previously about the revolution's outcomes and economic mismanagement, the conservative elite had long depleted their good will with the people by abusing their power and ignoring the real demands of Iranians. In addition, the new supreme leader, Khamenei, was not qualified to be a true leader and was incapable of justifying the divine rule of the jurist, although his power was extended by the 1989 constitutional amendments. Ayatollah Montazeri was Khomeini's designated successor by his religious credentials and long association with the regime, but the Supreme Leader himself had pushed him aside because of Montazeri's criticisms of the regime's brutal violence and injustice in the late 1980s.¹¹³ When the Assembly of Experts elected Sayyed Ali Khamenei as the new Supreme Leader of the IRI on June 4, 1989, he had not been at the rank of "*marja'iyyat* (being a source of imitation) as required by the Articles of 107 and 109 of the 1979 Constitution,"¹¹⁴ nor had the constitution been amended. The Iranian constitution was amended soon after, by order of Khomeini, and approved by the new Supreme Leader after a national referendum on July 8, 1989. The 1989 amendments eliminated the qualification of *marja'iyyat* for being a jurist; these amendments, however, also expanded the powers of the leader, such as giving him the appointment of the head of radio and television, determination of general policies, and coordination of relations among three branches of the government—the Executive, Legislative and Judicial branches. In addition, the office of prime minister was abolished, giving the president complete executive power. The Supreme Judiciary Council was replaced by the Head of Judiciary, who was to be appointed by the Supreme Leader. All

¹¹² Farhad Kazemi, "The Precarious Revolution," 91.

¹¹³ Said Amir Arjomand, *After Khomeini*, 36.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 36.

the amendments were meant to undermine the popular legitimacy of the system and give absolute power to the jurists. The new Supreme Leader used his office's capabilities fully to retain his control over the Revolutionary Guards, government bureaucracy, military, security forces, religious and mobilizational organizations, foundations, and Friday prayer leaders.

While the traditional conservative clergy was expanding its power, the pragmatist conservative clergy under the leadership of President Rafsanjani was strengthening the possible opposition groups among the ruling clergy and society against the personally weak leader, by means of economic liberation efforts. For example, he gave more emphasis to management than ideology that would create effective local governance capable of mobilizing resources, delivering social services, and bringing change. The mayor of Tehran, Gholam-Hossein Karbaschi, was the best example of this policy. Moreover, many specialists, managers, and academics of the Shah's period who had lost their jobs were encouraged to come back. New research institutions were founded and government training centers renovated. The government strengthened higher education to produce skilled personnel for the necessary developments. While the government was investing in institutions of higher education, it encouraged the private sector to invest as well. Daneshgah-e Azad-e Eslami (Islamic Open University) was founded and built many campuses in various cities of Iran. The newly educated personnel joined the government echelons and created a new middle class. The privatization or more accurately the hand-over of the public sector to the ruling elite's cronies, created parallel and competing power centers among the factional fault lines in addition to formal government institutions. While rising inflation was leading government officials to take bribes and President Rafsanjani was referring to these bribes as "expeditionary fees,"¹¹⁵ corruption generated complex ties between political, bureaucratic, and business groups.

3. Dual Legitimacy

President Khatami tried to use his strong public support and election victory to change the Islamic regime to more liberal ways, and challenged the divine legitimacy,

¹¹⁵ Ali Gheissari and Vali Nasr, *Democracy in Iran*, 124.

implicitly, for the first time in Iran, even though the system was under the strict control of the new Supreme Leader. After the elections, the Khatami period relatively relaxed the state repression and carried the political discussions to the public. His “rainbow coalition”¹¹⁶ of modernists, technocrats, Islamist liberals, and Islamist leftist-populists who emerged in the domestic politics of Iran during the Rafsanjani years proposed a large-scale political and economic reform agenda as well as the empowerment of citizens. Khatami’s foremost objective was to ensure the Iranians’ most fundamental right to determine their own destiny. He declared that to obtain this objective, the policies of the Executive branch would be based on “institutionalizing the rule of law; vigorous pursuit of justice...; promoting and consolidating the principle of accountability...; empowering the people in order to achieve and ensure an ever-increasing level of their discerning participation.”¹¹⁷ Although he could not immediately implement his agenda to produce new legislation, his election opened the reexamination of fundamental principles of the regime and broke the taboo of questioning the Supreme Leader’s role in Iranian politics. Khatami appointed a Commission for the Implementation of the Constitution by taking responsibility for the existing authority of the president in Article 113 of the constitution. He also promoted freedom of the press and allowed even some publications that had not been permitted by former administrations. The number of publications, ranging from daily newspapers to journals, increased and reached more than 1,200.¹¹⁸ Since radio and television were under the control of the conservative factions and unelected branches of the government, the rising number of news outlets and their ability to publish more critical articles brought political discussions in front of the Iranians. President Khatami focused on empowering Iranian citizens and promoted the rule of law with his reformist policies; his attempts, however, were undermined by the unelected bodies of the government.

¹¹⁶ Anoushiravan Ehteshami and Mahjoob Zweiri, *Iran and the Rise of its Neoconservatives*, 5.

¹¹⁷ Said Amir Arjomand, “Civil Society and the Rule of Law,” 286.

¹¹⁸ Nasser Momayesi, “Iran’s Struggle for Democracy,” *International Journal on World Peace* 17, no. 4 (2000), 62.

4. Threats

After the elections, the Khatami period relatively relaxed state repression and carried the political discussion to the public; the IRI's unelected institutions, however, curtailed reform efforts and freedom of the press. The conservative clergy was aware that the new Supreme Leader was not capable of challenging the reformist president's huge popular support, even with his office's powers. The conservatives had to marshal all available forces to contain the president in decision making and legislature.¹¹⁹ The Guardian Council and judiciary played the leading part in this confrontation. The Guardian Council was the most important asset of the conservatives. It would veto the reformists' legislation that could have diminished the powers of unelected institutions. President Khatami's administration, in fact, did try to do so, especially after the 1999 parliamentary elections that gave a majority of the seats to reformists. However, the Guardian Council vetoed the legislation that reformists passed in the Majles on "women's rights, family law, the prevention of torture, and electoral reform."¹²⁰ Since the Guardian Council had the approbatory supervision of election candidates,¹²¹ President Khatami also tried to deprive the jurists of this council their other means to block reformists in April 1999. However, the Majles reaffirmed this power after the students' uprising, with pressure from conservatives in the parliament. The judiciary was the second asset for conservatives to curtail the reform efforts. Although President Khatami had expected the assistance of the Iranian judiciary "in the management of a safe, secure, and just society based on rule of law,"¹²² this second unelected body of the system was also under the control of conservatives. The judiciary targeted the freedom of the press. While the pro-Khatami press was flourishing after the relaxation of state repression, the Supreme Leader called reformist journalism a grave threat. The Iranian judiciary banned 108 newspapers and magazines between 1997 and 2002.¹²³

¹¹⁹ Ali Gheissari and Vali Nasr, "The Conservative Consolidation in Iran," *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy* 47, no. 2 (2005), 177.

¹²⁰ Barbara Ann Rieffer-Flanagan, *Evolving Iran*, 65.

¹²¹ A. William Sami, "Iran's Guardian Council," 645.

¹²² Said Amir Arjomand, "Civil Society and the Rule of Law," 289.

¹²³ Said Amir Arjomand, *After Khomeini*, 93.

While state repression increased after the short period of its relaxation, state violence directly mobilized huge numbers of students to protest the regime when one of the daily magazines, *Salaam*, was closed by the government in July 1999. The possibility of a more dangerous situation of political dissidence had caused a severe response from conservative authority. The government started to attack the reformist camp's assets and supporters. In addition to legal closures and the arrest of journalists and editors of these publications, the conservatives took illegal actions to secure their power, including the assassination of several liberals and reformist journalists by a "renegade group within the Ministry of Intelligence."¹²⁴ Khatami insisted on the arrest of this group, which included a deputy minister, Sa'id Emami. He was imprisoned and said to have committed suicide. Shortly after this news, the reformist magazine *Salaam* published a secret letter written by him that summarized "the restrictive law with provisions of clerical censorship"¹²⁵ that caused the magazine's closure. Students in the University of Tehran started riots in response to the closure on the evening of July 7 and continued the next day, but the Revolutionary Guards, regular police, and hooligans of the Helpers of God (*Ansar Allah*)¹²⁶ violently tried to suppress the initial movement. The students were beaten, shot, and arrested, causing an officially unreleased number of casualties more than 200 injured and some 500 arrests. In response to this violence, the protests spread to Tabriz and fourteen other Iranian cities.

C. STUDENTS AS THE MOBILIZING STRUCTURES AND THEIR RESOURCES

In general, the mobilizing structures and resources increased with the reform efforts of Khatami. He appointed reform-minded intellectuals to his administration, such as his Islamic Culture and Guidance Minister, Ataollah Mohajerani and even a woman, Ma'someh Ebtekar, as his vice-president and instructed them to actively promote the establishment of civic organizations. The numbers of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), quasi-political parties and associations increased as much as the number of

¹²⁴ Nasser Momayesi, "Iran's Struggle for Democracy," 55.

¹²⁵ Said Amir Arjomand, *After Khomeini*, 95.

¹²⁶ Said Amir Arjomand, "Civil Society and the Rule of Law," 291.

newspapers and journals, especially in the areas of environmental issues, women's rights, youth issues and education. "Khatami himself established two NGOs and financed a dozen more NGOs specializing in women's issues. Among the new NGOs, there were 3,000 youth NGOs, 600 environmental NGOs, 500 women's NGOs, 60 NGOs engaged in human rights issues, and many other NGOs working for children and other vulnerable groups"¹²⁷ during his presidency. At the end of his first term, there were also 95 new quasi-political parties, 110 employers' guilds and 120 workers' guilds. The rise of civic organizations was preparing a more active force for new social movements in Iran. However, they were too immature to unify for a collective challenge to the regime until the recent Green Movement in 2009.

Since other civic organizations were not ready, the students were the first to challenge the regime. They were mobilized in the universities, where they could freely discuss the problems of the state and society, just as they had mobilized two decades ago for the conservative clergy. The students had always been the most effective recruits of social movements—especially when they allied with elites in Iran. The Iranian students' mobilization capacity and efficacy was one of the highest in the world. The seizure of the U.S. Embassy on November 4, 1979, and the holding of American diplomats as hostages for 444 days by "a group of Muslim students calling themselves *Daaneshjooyaane Mosalmaane Payro Khat-e Emaam* (the Muslim Students Following the Imam's Path, hereafter MSFIL)"¹²⁸ under the leadership of *Daftar-e Tahkim-e Vahdat* (Office for Consolidation of Unity–O.C.U. or Union of Islamic Association of University Students),¹²⁹ justified the strength of Iranian student activism with the boldest, most radical, and most consequential action by any student group in the history of student activism. The Iranian revolution had started with seminary students who had even participated in high-risk situations against the violent tyranny of the Shah.¹³⁰ The secular students from Iranian universities joined the struggle and supported the Islamic

¹²⁷ Omid Payrow Shabani, "The Green's Non-Violent Ethos: The Roots of Non-Violence in the Iranian Democratic Movement," *Constellations* 20, no. 2 (2013), 350.

¹²⁸ Ali Akbar Mahdi, "The Student Movement in the Islamic Republic of Iran," 3-1.

¹²⁹ Mehrdad Mashayekhi, "The Revival of the Student Movement in Post-Revolutionary Iran," 292.

¹³⁰ Ervand Abrahamian, "The Crowd in the Iranian Revolution," 14.

revolutionaries; their demands and expectations, however, were different from those of the clergy and its grassroots supporters. The secular-minded scholars and professors in the Shah's universities were a threat to the Islamic regime. Although students and universities had played a critical role in the achievement of the Islamic Revolution, the clergy destroyed the secular students' oppositional activism within the Cultural Revolution and created new student organizations that would support the revolution. Although the students protested, the universities were closed, and a new curriculum was developed according to Islamic principles.¹³¹

The revolutionaries created the student organizations to support their ideology and produce a new generation to serve them, but their initial supporters turned into their rivals. During the Cultural Revolution and after the reopening of universities, the sole body of student organizations left in the Iranian universities was the O.C.U., the Islamic Students' Association, which took part in the destruction of other student organizations. The members of O.C.U. became the representative of the state in campuses. They made the new regime's propaganda, controlled political activism, and met ideological challenges. During the Iran-Iraq war, this organization mobilized hundreds of students to the front lines. There was no political activism or student organization on the campuses other than O.C.U. before the end of the war.¹³² During the post-war years, student activism was limited to organizing speeches and seminars on cultural, religious, philosophical, and political subjects. These activities started to turn more critical of the conservatives' affairs. In response to the students' critical tone, the conservative clergy created "parallel organizations"¹³³ in universities in 1992, to contain the growing dissidence of O.C.U. in 1992. These organizations were the Islamic Association of Students (I.A.S.), the Students' of Islamic Society, the Hezbollah Students Union and Student *Basij*. Although both the Supreme Leader Khamenei and the President Rafsanjani supported these groups, the I.A.S. challenged the economic policies of the president, and things started to change. The O.C.U. and I.A.S. would be the most active groups who

¹³¹ Ali Akbar Mahdi, "The Student Movement in the Islamic Republic of Iran," 3-3.

¹³² Mehrdad Mashayekhi, "The Revival of the Student Movement," 293.

¹³³ Ibid., 294.

would support the reformist presidential candidate, Ayatollah Khatami, in his campaign later.

The students' world views and political stance changed in response to state-attributed economic and political problems as much as they were educated and learned from the new intellectuals' ideas. The students were the most effected part of the society by the long-lasting economic problems of Iran. Their changing world views made them realize the necessity of a more open society and personal freedoms. While they were educated and informed with the ideas of new intellectuals, they began to see the illegitimacy of divine rule. The Iranian university educational environment and student organization connections helped them to mobilize.

As noted earlier, student activism had started long before the 1997 presidential elections, but the students' contributions to the presidential election and victory of the reformists were novel and determinative. The students in support of the reformers were among the voters, activists, and reference groups. First, there were nearly 1.2 million students in Iranian universities, most of who participated in the elections and voted for Khatami, according to many analysts. Their vote count was more than 1 million out of a total 20 million votes for Khatami. Second, the estimated number of officially involved students in Khatami's presidential campaign was 5,000. The students' informal contribution had to be much greater since the O.C.U. had branches in sixty state universities and several Islamic Azad universities. Last, the students were the reference groups for ordinary Iranians with their growing social and political status in Iran, where no oppositional political party or reliable official media existed.¹³⁴

The students' activism, organizations, and resources expanded after the elections with the relaxation of state repression and the promotion of political activism by the Khatami administration that would enable them to start protesting. The first independent student organizations were founded in this period, long before the 1999 student protests in Tehran, with many peaceful demonstrations taking place on and off campus on historical occasions like Student Day. The new independent student organizations were

¹³⁴ Mehrdad Mashayekhi, "The Revival of the Student Movement," 293.

Iran's Intellectual Students' Organization, The Student Committee to Defend Political Prisoners, Students' and the Alumni National Union.¹³⁵ They were small but liberal and nationalist, as well as allied with other student organizations, both from state and private universities. They started to build connections with emerging semi-political parties and other civic organizations noted earlier. Moreover, the students' publications increased along with the numbers of organizations. There were 260 student journals in the 1998 "Student Press Festival,"¹³⁶ and this number increased.

The student protests in July 1999 marked the "beginning of the end" or "Iran's second revolution"¹³⁷ for many analysts. Huge numbers of students in Iranian streets and growing numbers of student organizations on campuses carried out the rising political activism. The reformist elite could use the movement as leverage to undermine the legitimacy of divine rule if they had wanted. However, both the reformist elite's unwillingness to do so and the belligerent behavior of some of the student groups that clashed with security forces prevented that. Moreover, what was missing in terms of social movements in the students' uprising was that the students lacked a unified leadership that would keep demonstrations peaceful and maintain consistent demands.¹³⁸ The students could not reach the other growing dissident groups of Iranian society such as women and the middle class or workers who would have enhanced the frames of the movement and turned it into a broader pro-democracy uprising. Nevertheless, the student organizations and their increasing resources proved the students' potential.

D. FRAMING

Growing ideas of personal liberties and freedom within the ideological framework of Shi'a Islam framed the student movements. First, the new intellectuals' ideas framed their activism, as they appealed to and influenced the world views of students after the

¹³⁵ Mehrdad Mashayekhi, "The Revival of the Student Movement," 298.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Jahangir Amuzegar, "Iran's Theocracy under Siege," 135.

¹³⁸ Elaine Sciolino, "Iran Students Halt Protests but Still Press for Changes," *World Collections, The Network Times*, July 18, 1999, accessed November 25, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/1999/07/18/world/iran-students-halt-protests-but-still-press-for-changes.html>.

period of the Islamization project. While the Islamic government forced Iranians to live according to Shi'a Islam's daily practices and censored other global values in the world, international developments on global values reached the Iranian students with the help of world media and communication technologies. The students' support of the reformist elite and protests against the closure of opposition press was the reaction to state repression on personal freedoms, which was compatible with Islam.

Although the students' activism in Iran had been framed by the ideology of the IRI after the revolution, the revolution's "Islamic utopianism"¹³⁹ failed with remarkable events such as the unexpected defeat in the war, the removal of Ayatollah Montazeri from his position, the privatization of the economy by Rafsanjani, and exorbitant financial affairs of the ruling clergy and the spread of corruption. While the students were alienated from the IRI's ideology, the new religious intellectuals' ideas started to resonate in the minds of students. Mohammad Mojtahed Shabestari, Abdolkarim Soroush and Mosen Kadivar were the most notable ones, as was reformist President Khatami.¹⁴⁰ These intellectuals generally argued that Islam plays a critical role in human life and is as compatible with democracy as it is in Western countries. The new intellectuals argued the importance of popular legitimacy and the rule of law in Islamic terms, as opposed to the conservatives who saw the importance of divine legitimacy with Islamic values as paramount. Although these ideas had existed before, the difference this time was that these new religious intellectuals were disseminating their message through growing numbers of pro-reformist press and reaching the students in universities in person. For example, Soroush and Shabestari published their series of articles in the journal *Kayhan-e Farhangi* in the early 1990s.¹⁴¹ President Khatami made several speeches on campuses during his presidential campaign.

Simultaneously with these new intellectuals' ideas, the global values such as human rights, women's rights and equality in the world were rising and reaching students

¹³⁹ Mehrdad Mashayekhi, "The Revival of the Student Movement," 302.

¹⁴⁰ Mehran Kamrava, *Iran's Intellectual Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 122.

¹⁴¹ Mehrdad Mashayekhi, "The Revival of the Student Movement," 293.

via radio, satellite TV, and the Internet. The radio programs on the BBC, Voice of America, Radio France, Radio Israel, and Radio Free Europe had political content. The democratic values were penetrating into Iranian society, especially among the youth and students since they were less antagonistic to the West than their parents. Satellite TV and Internet facilitated and increased this penetration as they quickly spread to Iran. For example, there were at least 30,000 satellite dishes in 1994. There were 65,000 to 80,000 people who had Internet accounts in 1999. In addition, the young Iranians were accessing the Internet not only from private accounts but also from Internet cafes that numbered nearly 1,500 in Tehran alone.¹⁴² When the conservatives crashed the students' uprising in 1999, the students had already been learning and seeking their basic rights, both in Islamic and global terms.

E. OUTCOMES

The students' movement alliance with the reformist elite ended when President Khatami could not back up the students' protests against state violence. The outcome was disastrous for the reformist elite and many students, but neither the reformist elite nor the students quit their political struggle for a more liberal government and society. The students continued their political activism in their lives and limited space. Although their unity and their movement's efficacy waned, the Iranian students brought an irreversible challenge to the IRI's legitimacy when they were severely suppressed by the Iranian security forces. The students became one of the reference points for ordinary Iranians to ask for whom to vote and why. The Student Movement initiated the early changes of Iranian public opinion about the Islamic regime and political disclosures in the IRI. The majority of Iranians did not take part in the student movements but they once more showed their dissatisfaction with the conservative clergy by electing a lay person, Ahmadinejad, as the president who succeeded Khatami, for more accountable governance that would bring equality and better economic conditions, if not a more liberal society.

¹⁴² Mehrdad Mashayekhi, "The Revival of the Student Movement," 304.

IV. THE GREEN MOVEMENT IN IRAN

The Green Movement was the last episode of Iranian social movements that started in response to the 2009 presidential election results and turned into a pro-democracy movement. It testified to the existence of a continuous and growing social collective force in Iran that pushes liberalization from below against the IRI's rigidity and severe state repression. Although many thought it was unsuccessful and had waned, the Green Movement was actually a victory in two ways. First, the movement was successful in terms of social movements that united the separate mobilizational groups with broader frames and peaceful tactics. Second, it arguably shook the IRI's legitimacy after the Supreme Leader Khamenei's partial response to alleged election fraud, which backed President Ahmadinejad and the Iranian government's severe repression of peaceful protesters. In addition, the movement's silent continuity and efforts changed Iranian opinion, which eventually was testified with the election of a reformist candidate in the first round of the 2013 presidential elections.

The Green Movement started as a reactionary social movement when Iranians tried once more to change their regime. The Iranian state's continuous and occasional opportunities, along with threats, served in different ways for a larger opposition, this time. The Iranian conservatives had not seemed united after the Khatami era, but the policies of President Ahmadinejad, which were neither keeping this faction's interests intact nor solving Iranians' economic problems, signaled a possible weakness to opposition groups. The 2009 presidential election and relative relaxation of state restrictions on the media during the election period provided the Iranian state's occasional political opening to take action as it had done in 1997. The reformist elite utilized this opportunity to gain access to the executive part of the government once again, but the conservatives allegedly rigged the election and unleashed state security forces on protesters, which caused the sudden erosion of rights and severe repression. Unlike in the 1999 Student Movement, the conservatives' response was more brutal and direct, which undermined the legitimacy of the divine rulers since the elections had been a strong justification of the regime so far. The long-lasting economic problems attributed

to the government, continuous erosion of rights and severe state repression enlarged this occasional opportunity and mobilized Iranians to secure their rights. Although Iranian NGOs were scarce and formal organizations' activities were limited and controlled by the Iranian government, the student, women, and other civic organizations that had been founded in the Khatami era and their underground links mobilized different groups to protest. Iranian reformists, students, and women were the main participants of the Green Movement. Information and communication technologies, with social media like Facebook and Twitter, helped these groups to create a free space for political discourse, distribute information about state violence and recruit members to protest. The Green Movement utilized the same frames and many tactics of the 1979 Iranian Revolution. Shi'a Islam's revolutionary frames were regenerated by opposition groups and utilized to challenge the conservative clergy, in a sort of cultural jiu-jitsu.¹⁴³

The state's severe repression of protesters and the movement's own leadership thwarted it; the Green Movement, however, did not end. It kept working peacefully to emerge again since both its leaders and participants did not want to radicalize which would cause the same grievous consequences as in 1979, during the war, and in 1999. The Green Movement created a new identity that posed the greatest threat to divine legitimacy in the IRI's short history and which would be hard to fix for conservative clergy in the future. The alleged election fraud and reaction of peaceful masses changed the Iranians' opinion about the Islamic regime.

A. THE GROWING DEMANDS OF IRANIANS AND THE GREEN MOVEMENT

Unlike the Student Movement in 1999, the Green Movement had broader demands directly addressing the Supreme Leader, since the movement was a coalition of different groups who sought change. The movement's manifesto targeting the Supreme Leader announced ten goals on January 3, 2010, including:

¹⁴³ Charles Kruzman, "Cultural Jiu-Jitsu and The Iranian Greens," in *The People Reloaded: The Green Movement and The Struggle for Iran's Future*, edited by Nader Hashemi and Danny Postel (New York: First Melville House Printing, 2010), 9.

1. Resignation of Mr. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad [as the president]...abolish the vetting process of candidates [by the Guardian Council]..., 2. Releasing all the political prisoners..., 3. Free means of mass communication..., 4. Recognizing the rights of all the lawful political groups, university students and women movements..., 5. Independence of the universities [from political meddling and intervention]; ...abolishing the illegal Supreme Council for Cultural Revolution [that interferes in the affairs of the universities]..., 6. Putting on trial all those that have tortured and murdered [people]..., 7. Independence of the judiciary by electing [rather than appointing] its head ..., 8. Banning the military, police, and security forces from intervening in politics..., 9. Economic and political independence of the seminaries..., 10. Electing all the officials who must become responsive to criticisms... Not meeting these [legitimate] demands of the Green Movement ... will also deepen the crisis with painful consequences, for which only the Supreme Leader will be responsible.¹⁴⁴

Almost six months before this manifesto, the Green Movement was born after the Iranian presidential elections in 2009, as a reactionary protest using peaceful tactics. It took its name from a green sash that Iran's previous two-term president Mohammad Khatami handed to Mir Hossein Mousavi. The initial slogan in the protest was "Where is my vote?"¹⁴⁵ The oppositional groups demanded their stolen votes and annulment of the election, but the Supreme Leader and incumbent government responded to the claimants with severe state repression. The demands expanded in time, and the Green Movement turned into a pro-democracy movement in Iran. However, the IRI's rulers accused opposition leaders of being traitors working for Western powers and defined the Green Movement as a "velvet revolution."¹⁴⁶ The leaders of the movement were arrested, and two presidential candidates, Mir Hossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karroubi, were put under house arrest in 2011. The events between 2009 and 2011 were carved into the memories of Iranians as one thing: the IRI needed reform.

¹⁴⁴ Jenny Lo, "Achieving the Unexpected," 135.

¹⁴⁵ Abbas Milani, "The Green Movement," in *United States Institute of Peace Press* (2010), accessed June 6, 2013, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1327761018?accountid=12702>.

¹⁴⁶ Gunes Murat Tezcur, "Iran's Presidential Election," 20.

B. POLITICAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE GREEN MOVEMENT

The Green Movement happened when the Iranian state's continuous and occasional opportunities (along with threats) served in different ways for a larger group of opposition. The majority of Iranians had not taken part in the Student Movement, but they had shown dissatisfaction with conservative clergy by electing a lay person, Ahmadinejad, as the president who succeeded Khatami. However, the first term of the new president signaled the inadequacy of the choice. The division among the ruling elite deepened and intra-conservative confrontation started. Economic problems continued but were not solved as proposed by President Ahmadinejad. The presidential election was an opportunity to take advantage of the situation for the reformist elite, as it was in 1997. The reformists, however, lost in the elections. The alleged election fraud suddenly showed the erosion of rights to Iranians, and the Supreme Leader's partiality undermined the divine legitimacy of the IRI.

1. Division of Elite and Intra-Conservative Conflict

Before the 2009 elections, although the conservative camp seemed united, there was a power struggle between traditional and new conservatives that created an opportune division in the elite for opposition groups, especially the reformist elite. The presidency of Ahmadinejad, who was a student activist in the revolution, a senior commander of the *Sepah* Army or *Basij* in the Iran-Iraq war, and a middle-rank political figure as the mayor of Tehran, transformed the political struggle in Iran from conservative versus reformist to intra-conservative.¹⁴⁷ The conservatives, in fact, had created their own paradox when they tried to contend with liberal reform efforts during President Khatami's two-term presidency by empowering the security and economic apparatus of the IRI while the Guardian Council and judiciary were attacking the reformers' assets.¹⁴⁸ A new faction of conservatives was born: neo-conservatives or neo-

¹⁴⁷ Anoushiravan Ehteshami and Mahjoob Zweiri, *Iran and the Rise of its Neoconservatives*, 54.

¹⁴⁸ Vali Nasr, "The Conservative Wave Rolls On," *Journal of Democracy* 16, no. 4 (October 2005), 16.

principalists,¹⁴⁹ whose members were rising from the echelons of the IRGC and *Basij*. While the IRGC had been a security and economic asset of conservatives in the early post-revolution and during the war years under Khomeini, the new Supreme Leader, Khamenei, turned it into more of a political player by appointing the most loyal conservatives to the higher ranks of the IRGC and using them to suppress reformists. During President Khatami's years, many of these figures entered Iranian domestic politics through regional or parliamentary elections. For example, President Ahmadinejad himself was the most remarkable figure of this new faction, who won the City and Village Council elections in 2003.¹⁵⁰ The neo-conservatives also won one-third of all seats in legislative elections in 2004.¹⁵¹

With its rising power in Iran, the neo-conservative faction challenged the traditional conservatives and the absolute rule of clergy on Shi'a jurisprudence, as well as the role of clergy in the state and the economy. Initially, this new faction's political ideology followed "the jurisprudence of Ayatollah Mohammad Taqi Mesbah-Yazdi,"¹⁵² which had a strong anti-clerical, authoritarian, national, and pragmatic stance. Different from the concept of *wilayat al-faqih*¹⁵³ that justified the rule of the jurist and, by its extension, clergy, by both divine and popular legitimacy, Yazdi proposed that *Faqih* could only derive his legitimacy from God, not people. In addition, this legitimacy could be actualized by anyone who has power. The neo-conservatives denied the right of clerical rule under this ideology, since they were the soldiers of the revolution and the war, paying high prices with their lives. This denial took many forms. For example, President Ahmadinejad's claim that the last Imam visited him in his dreams and public appearances was an attempt to separate clergy and the basis of its legitimacy. More concretely, Ahmadinejad filled the government, especially his cabinet, with members of the IRGC and related organizations compared to previous officials who had links to the

¹⁴⁹ Roozbeh Safshekan and Farzan Sabet, "The Ayatollah's Praetorians: The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and the 2009 Election Crisis," *The Middle East Journal* 64, no. 4 (Autumn 2010), 550.

¹⁵⁰ Roozbeh Safshekan and Farzan Sabet, "The Ayatollah's Praetorians," 549.

¹⁵¹ Vali Nasr, "The Conservative Wave Rolls On," 12.

¹⁵² Roozbeh Safshekan and Farzan Sabet, "The Ayatollah's Praetorians," 550.

¹⁵³ Ibrahim Moussawi, *Shi'ism and the Democratization Process in Iran*, 7.

clergy. Last, the neo-conservatives' ideology also turned the IRI's Islamic rhetoric to a more nationalistic tone, which sought to make a great Iran by promoting a strong army and economy rather than a revolutionary enterprise and Islamic economics. Thus, the neo-conservatives tried to develop an economy like the Chinese model, which enhanced the state over the economy, with privatization of large state sectors to the affiliated organizations or individuals with a populist intent, to gain Iranians' support by producing required jobs and better economic conditions for the poor. This policy, however, favored neo-conservatives' cronies most. For example, "the *Khatim al-Anbiya'* Headquarters, the IRGC's most visible economic arm,"¹⁵⁴ became the biggest contractor of the government by bypassing the bidding process completely.

2. Alleged Election Fraud as a Motivator

While the conservative elite was contending with the rise of neo-conservatives and intra-conservative struggle was continuing, the 2009 presidential election and relative relaxation of state restrictions on media during the election period provided the occasional political opportunity for the reformist groups. President Ahmadinejad was the frontrunner of the election with his populist redistributive policies, which included direct cash handouts. Although the intra-conservative conflict existed, various institutions of the regime, like the Guardian Council, were still backing him to some extent.¹⁵⁵ On the other side, ex-president Mohammad Khatami initially announced his candidacy, but later withdrew in favor of Mir Hossein Mousavi, who had been the Prime Minister of the IRI between 1981 and 1989.¹⁵⁶ At the beginning of his campaign, Mousavi identified himself as neither a reformist nor a conservative. The reason for his reemergence in politics was primarily because of his disagreement with President Ahmadinejad's policies. He emphasized the need to address the poor economy and "dishonest methods of making economic and political decisions."¹⁵⁷ He also argued that President Ahmadinejad had been diverted from the revolution's principles and become a dictator. Mousavi's

¹⁵⁴ Roozbeh Safshekan and Farzan Sabet, "The Ayatollah's Praetorians," 555.

¹⁵⁵ Gunes Murat Tezcur, "Iran's Presidential Election," 14.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Jenny Lo, "Achieving the Unexpected," 131.

presidential campaign mobilized the major reformist groups as much as the others who were eager to remove Ahmadinejad. He became a leader for the “anti-Ahmadinejad coalition,”¹⁵⁸ since he was religious and ethnically Azeri-Turk, and his wife supported the women’s rights struggle. The core supporters of Mousavi were the educated urban middle class, women, youth, and even those who voted for Ahmadinejad in the previous election. The IRI relaxed the media restrictions for election competition and encouraged public debates for election campaigns. The candidates even debated on TV, which generally happens in democracies like the United States of America. Mousavi’s popularity increased with his liberal points of view. His wife’s former activities and support for Iranian women’s rights in the presidential campaign helped him. His criticisms about Ahmadinejad’s economic mismanagement and injustice attracted many in Iran, but the Guardian Council banned his campaign and public gatherings after the TV debates. The reformist opposition started to use social media to continue its struggle and ask for the votes of Iranians.

3. Casting a Shadow on Dual Legitimacy

The alleged election fraud and direct support of the Supreme Leader to President Ahmadinejad worked hand-in-hand to undermine both the popular and divine legitimacy of the Iranian political system. The rise of Mousavi and his election campaign raised a challenging constituency, but the Green Movement had begun and the legitimacy of the IRI started to crumble when the election was allegedly rigged, and ended with Ahmadinejad’s landslide victory. The result of the election was announced by the Ministry of Interior (MOI) on Saturday, June 13. President Ahmadinejad was the winner, having received about 24,600,000 of approximately 39,400,000 valid votes or 62.63 percent.¹⁵⁹ Mousavi had only around 13,300,000 votes, and the other candidates had fewer than 1,000,000 votes. The result was problematic because the reported number of eligible voters was less than in the previous elections in 2008, which was impossible with

¹⁵⁸ Gunes Murat Tezcur, “Iran’s Presidential Election,” 15.

¹⁵⁹ M. Hadi Sohrabi-Haghighat and Shohre Mansouri, “Where is My Vote? ICT Politics in the Aftermath of Iran’s Presidential Election,” *International Journal of Emerging Technologies and Society*, 8, no. 1 (2010), 28.

the population growth rate of Iran. Second, the MOI never announced the vote distribution of provinces and districts. Third, the SMS network was turned off, observers of Mousavi's campaign were expelled from polling stations, and insufficient precautions were taken to prevent vote selling and ballot stuffing. In addition, the IRI government never took any real action to investigate the election fraud by an independent commission. All of these factors undermined both the credibility of the elections and public trust of the electoral system.¹⁶⁰

In addition to the problematic presidential election that created question marks on the tenets of the popular legitimacy of the system, the Supreme Leader made his biggest mistake by supporting President Ahmadinejad after the elections and warning that violence would be used to stop protests. He had not made such a mistake during the 1999 Student Movement, one that would directly confront him and his office with Iranians on the streets. First, the Supreme Leader immediately confirmed the presidency of Ahmadinejad although the losing parties were requesting an investigation of the election fraud. He soon after accepted this request; his prompt announcement, however, increased the peoples' doubts. Later, after the protests began, he warned the opposition in his Friday sermon on June 19 to stop the demonstrations or its leaders would be responsible for "chaos, violence, and bloodshed."¹⁶¹ His two actions put him firmly on the same side as the liars and despots who rigged the election, and finished his arbiter role in the regime.¹⁶²

4. Threats as a Motivator

Although the IRI's continuous and occasional political opportunities were helpful, the main motives of protesters in the Green Movement were the result of economic problems, as well as state repression and the sudden erosion of civic rights after the elections. President Ahmadinejad's populist policies and pragmatic efforts could not solve the chronic economic problems that mobilized many Iranians first to support

¹⁶⁰ Gunes Murat Tezcur, "Iran's Presidential Election," 15.

¹⁶¹ Said Amir Arjomand, *After Khomeini*, 170.

¹⁶² Said Amir Arjomand, "The Iranian Revolution in the New Era," *Current Trends in Islamic Ideology* 10 (August 2010), 5.

Mousavi and later the Green Movement. However, it was state repression and theft of Iranians' votes that changed economic grievances to political demands and brought huge numbers of people to the streets.

Ahmadinejad's previous victory in 2005 was due to his economic promises for poor Iranians; the economic conditions in Iran, however, had not changed much before the 2009 elections. President Ahmadinejad turned to more populist economic policies with his promises to Iranians such as, "bringing the oil money to people's tables"¹⁶³ in 2005. The government provided more public subsidies for gasoline, food, and housing. Energy subsidies alone represented about 12% of Iran's GDP if not more in real measures. In addition to subsidies, President Ahmadinejad gave cash handouts to the poor. The government provided low-interest loans for agriculture, tourism and industry, and instituted loan forgiveness policies. Ahmadinejad's administration established the \$1.3 billion Imam Reza Mehr Fund (Imam Reza Compassion Fund) to assist youth with marriage, housing, and education in 2006. In 2007, the government implemented a rationing system to reduce gasoline consumption. Although this policy led to public riots, gasoline consumption dropped. In January 2010, after the Supreme Leader's support of President Ahmadinejad's targeted subsidy reform, the parliament passed a massive overhaul of Iran's system of state subsidies. The subsidy law reduced state subsidies by \$20 billion and sent some part of them directly to the pockets of many poor via bank accounts. The goals of the reforms were to reduce overconsumption, poverty, and inequality. Many thought the reduction of Iran's subsidies were necessary for Iran's long-term economic sustainability, but subsidy cuts led to high inflation in the prices of basic goods and gasoline. President Ahmadinejad's efforts turned into more budget deficits, and his subsidies remained ineffective in reducing inflation, unemployment, and poverty;¹⁶⁴ they also damaged market prices with government price-control policies.

While the economic problems were intensifying, the allegedly rigged election and state repression of protesters caused occasional threats. Iranians' economic grievances

¹⁶³ Shayerah Ilias, Iran's Economic Conditions: U.S. Policy Issues, *Congressional Research Service*, April 22, 2010.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

turned into political demands after the election results. The protests started immediately after the announcement of election results. Although he cancelled at the last minute, Mousavi was the one who called for the first protests on June 15.¹⁶⁵ The Iranians did not respond to the cancellation but spontaneously started to march peacefully as their number rose to millions. The IRI government, with the blessings of the Supreme Leader, used its *Basij* (volunteer militias under the IRGC) and security forces against the demonstrators. This use of force caused large numbers of casualties; protests, however, continued almost for a month longer with unprecedented numbers. Later, the scale of the demonstrations was reduced, but they did not end although the security forces used every means to suppress the masses. They accused protesters of being traitors working for Western powers. The government hanged several people and showed their willingness to continue publicly hanging more protesters. The protest leaders and their supporters were arrested, tortured, and exiled. The media was banned. The government ignored what happened at the end of the elections. However, the Green Movement continued to carry on demonstrations almost in every possible gathering, such as the anniversary of the Student Movement or religious days that the government had not banned.

C. MOBILIZATION STRUCTURES AND RESOURCES OF THE GREEN MOVEMENT

Although the Green Movement in Iran did not have an intact hierarchical structure and did not include the huge membership of formal organizations like workers or teachers unions, the reformist faction of the ruling Shi'a clergy, many intellectuals from universities, journalists, and a growing number of educated, urban, middle class took part in the Green Movement. Three main social classes in Iran—reformists, students, and women—in this growing middle class were the most active members of the Movement since their organizational capabilities and links were increasing with the help of the Khatami era. While reformists proposed better governance and took support from the mainly urban middle class in the election, Iranian students and women became the front runners of the movement with their informal and underground links to Iranian society.

¹⁶⁵ Said Amir Arjomand, *After Khomeini*, 169.

Because the IRI's government had severely suppressed any formal opposition organizations, and forced formal organizations to abide by the regime's rules, it was not a surprise not to see workers and other organizations in the movement as a whole. However, small numbers of workers, teachers, and even government officials individually took part in the Green Movement.¹⁶⁶ Although there is scarce data about the Green Movement's mobilizing resources, the information and communication technologies were the biggest resources of the movement that enabled the opposition to bypass government censorship and inform Iranians.

1. The Reformist Elite and Its Role

The reformist faction of the Shi'a clergy and its links to Iran's urban middle class were the leadership cadre of the Green Movement. Their roots and reform efforts dated back to the 1905–1911 Constitutional Revolution, which demanded democratic government, elections, and a parliamentary system. Mehdi Bazargan, Ali Shariati, Ayatollah Morteza Mottahari and Ayatollah Mahmood Telegani were the pioneers of the reformists in the 1979 revolution.¹⁶⁷ Although Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khomeini and his supporters repressed reformists in the early years of the revolution, they reemerged between 1997 and 2004. Mir Hossein Mousavi, who was put under house arrest because of his leadership in the Green Movement, was one of the active participants of the 1979 revolution;¹⁶⁸ the increasing state-attributed economic problems, brutal repression and growing erosion of civic rights, however, alienated him and many others like him from the government. The reformists never wanted a total regime change, but they demanded the true execution of the IRI's constitution. They saw the affairs of the government as corruption and tyranny. They claimed that Islam has a democratic character and that Shi'a jurisprudence enables reform by *ijtihad* (independent reasoning).¹⁶⁹ The reformists' modern ideas and moderate behavior appealed generally to intellectuals, journalists, and

¹⁶⁶ Nader Hashemi and Danny Postel, "Introduction," in *The People Reloaded: The Green Movement and The Struggle for Iran's Future*, edited by Nader Hashemi and Danny Postel (New York: First Melville House Printing, 2010), XIX.

¹⁶⁷ Mehran Kamrava, *Iran's Intellectual Revolution*, 120.

¹⁶⁸ Ibrahim Moussawi, *Shi'ism and the Democratization Process in Iran*, 188.

¹⁶⁹ Kamrava, *Shi'ism and the Democratization*, 88.

the educated urban middle class since they were also more interested in liberation than in regime change.

2. Students and Their Role in the Movement

While reformist Shi'a clergy created the leadership of the movement, Iranian students were the foot soldiers of the Green Waves in Iran after the alleged 2009 election fraud. Without students, their links, and the universities, there could not be a mobilization. The Iranian students had always been politically active, as explained in the previous chapter. The reformist era under the presidency of moderate cleric Muhammad Khatami provided opportunities and relative free space for the re-creation of student organizations in the IRI.¹⁷⁰ Although they were suppressed by the current regime, their political activism continued. Students increased both in state and private universities. For example, there were more than a million students in universities and two million in postsecondary schools during the 2005-2006 school year. The female students accounted for 64 percent of this population. In addition to these numbers, the students at private *Azad* universities rose from 600,000 in 1997–1998 to 860,000 in 2004–2005.¹⁷¹ Students' activism continued to protest the regime, both for their own demands and for greater frames. For example, students in Tehran's Amir Kabir University protested against President Ahmadinejad by holding his pictures upside down and chanting "Dictator, go home!" when he came to speak in December 2006.¹⁷² In addition to their campus activism, those who had taken part in the 1999 Student Movement had not quit politics. Whether they had become members of the urban middle class, or were the most impacted members of the poor and unemployed, they were in the Green Waves, shoulder to shoulder.

¹⁷⁰ Ray Takeyh, "Iran at a Crossroads," *The Middle East Journal* 57, no. 1 (2003), 42.

¹⁷¹ Ali Afsahari and H. Graham Underwood, "Iran's Resilient Civil Society: The Student Movement's Struggle," *Journal of Democracy* 18, no. 4 (October 2007), 87.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 91.

3. Women and Their Role as Foot Soldiers

Women were the other foot soldiers of the Green Movement. Iranian women took their part not only in the Green Movement but also in the 1999 Student Movement and in the 1979 revolution to end the Shah's tyranny, but they never gained their deserved freedoms. In 1979, Iranian women sided with their husbands and brothers to topple the Shah, but they did not anticipate that the post-revolutionary government would lock them in their veils and homes. From that time on, women struggled for their civic rights with peaceful protests. In 1999, Iranian women took part in the student protests. When the students were suppressed, most women concluded that it would be hard to improve the situation of women in Iran,¹⁷³ but continued their protests peacefully. A one-million signature campaign was one of the best examples of Iranian women's efforts for their goals. The campaign dimensions demonstrated Iranian women's capabilities with their domestic and international links.¹⁷⁴ The Green Movement was just another part of their struggle. The pictures of women in the Green Waves testified to their participation in the protests. Women helped the movement with their capabilities.

4. New Resources of the Green Movement

Long before the Arab Spring, the Green Movement was called a "Twitter Revolution."¹⁷⁵ The Green Movement utilized the Internet and the growing number of cellphones, with social media like Facebook and Twitter, to distribute information, overcome state censorship, and organize protests. In 1992, the Institute for Studies in Theoretical Physics and Mathematics initiated Internet usage in Iran.¹⁷⁶ The Internet remained as an academic tool until 1997, but Internet usage was extended from government organizations to the economic sector only. In Iran, there were 25,669,000 Internet users in 2009, compared to 200,000 in 2001. In addition, there were 50,000,000

¹⁷³ Mehrahgiz Kar, "Focusing on Women in the Internal Politics of Iran," *Brown Journal of World Affairs* XV:1 (Fall/Winter 2008), 83.

¹⁷⁴ Catherine Sameh, "Discourses of Equality, Rights and Islam in the One Million Signatures Campaign in Iran," *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 12, no. 3-4 (2010), 444.

¹⁷⁵ M. Hadi Sohrabi-Haghighat and Shohre Mansouri, "Where is My Vote?", 25.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

cellphones and 25,220,000 landline phones in 2010.¹⁷⁷ Facebook first became a tool for elections after the Guardian Council banned presidential candidate Mousavi's traditional communication methods and restricted traditional media. Later, Twitter became a free place for political discussions and information sharing. The protesters shared videos and pictures of state brutality in these cyber platforms. Although the role of the Internet and social media in mobilization is arguably limited compared to face-to-face links, the protesters used both Twitter and their cellphones in order to activate their existing informal links to organize and initiate their protests. If they were not the main source of the mobilization, the Internet and social media carried videos of the IRI's state brutality that aroused the feelings of the Iranian people.

D. SOURCES OF FRAMING

Shi'a Islam and its daily practices framed the Green Movement in Iran. The stolen votes of many Iranians in the presidential election were the initial reason to protest. Iranians realized the injustice of the Islamic government. The Supreme Leader's partisan comments on election results, and threatening voice to stop the Green Movement's protests, intensified oppositional consciousness. Huge numbers of protesters in several cities started a cognitive liberation with Iran's historical background, which had once managed to destroy the tyranny of the secular Shah. The government's violent repression, beatings, and killings in the protest only increased this cognitive liberation and motivated people to participate rather than stay at home. The protesters began to feel as if they were the true defenders of Shi'a Islam and the IRI, since the protesters stayed peaceful and the state used more repression. The green color became the symbol of Islam and later turned into a symbol of civil rights. People in the protest movement identified themselves as defenders of innocents against despots, as if at Karbala.

The new version of reformist Shi'a Islam, growing ideas of freedom, and democracy among Iranian youth, with an Islamist perspective and the holy struggle against tyranny in Shi'a history, resonated in both the minds and hearts of the Green Wave's protesters. The reformist version of Shi'a Islam has always advocated human

¹⁷⁷ M. Hadi Sohrabi-Haghighat and Shohre Mansouri, "Where is My Vote?", 25.

rights and democracy. The women's long struggle for their rights has been changing public opinion in Iran about human rights. The globalization of human rights, international organizations' pressure, and easy access to the world via the Internet also helped Iranians to see their government's human rights abuses. Hasan Davoodifard and Jayum Jawan argue that the collective efforts of women and international pressure forced even the IRI's incumbent government to launch an "Iranian Islamic Human Rights Commission"¹⁷⁸ in late 1995. In addition, the growing number of educated youth in Iran advocated freedom and democracy. For example, the first systematic analysis of support for democracy in the IRI, "Support for Democracy in Iran," uses data coming from two surveys in 2005 and 2008 to argue that, while religiosity and old age negatively relate to democracy in the IRI, education, young age, and economic grievances indirectly promote democracy in Iran. Greater dissatisfaction with the regime increases the demand for democracy in Iran.¹⁷⁹

The participants of the Green Movement mixed the ideas of human rights and democracy with Shi'a Islam. The Green Movement arguably shook the regime's legitimacy by attacking its monopoly on Shi'a Islam. It reinterpreted the meaning of injustice and equated the incumbent government with that of the secular Shah. The protesters applied Shi'a Islam's values, symbols, stories, and practices to their actions, just as the 1979 revolutionary groups did. They placed the Green Movement's martyrs next to the Shi'a Imam, Ali, in their fight against the injustice of the IRI's government.¹⁸⁰ They showed their wounds proudly to cameras, as if they were signs of their holy commitment. Unlike the Student Movement in 1999, the Green Movement stayed peaceful by using many tactics from the 1979 revolution. The street marches and street barricades, shouting *Allah-u-Akbar* (God is great) from rooftops at night, and encouraging the civil disobedience of women by showing some of their hair were some of their tactics. Charles Kruzman argues that the Green Movement was a "cultural jiu-

¹⁷⁸ Hassan Davoodifard and Jayum Anak Jawan, "Change of Human Rights Perspective in Iran," 127.

¹⁷⁹ Gunes Murat Tezcur, Taghi Azadarmaki, Mehri Bahar and Hooshang Nayebi, "Support for Democracy in Iran," 232.

¹⁸⁰ Michael M. J. Fischer, "The Rhythmic Beat of the Revolution in Iran," 509.

jitsu”¹⁸¹ that attacked the government monopoly on Shi’a Islam. The government reaction and its repression showed the conservatives’ fear of losing their power.

E. OUTCOMES

The Green Movement lost its intensity when the IRI government increased its level of violent repression, but the movement was not totally dissolved. The government ignored what happened at the end of the elections and continued to behave as if everything were normal in Iran. However, the movement had changed Iranian public opinion about the regime’s legitimacy. The signs of the Green Movement emerged in the news again, as the Iranian presidential elections to choose the successor to President Ahmadinejad on June 14, 2013, approached. Iranian police arrested supporters of the reformist candidate, Hasan Rowhani, on June 2, 2014 after their chants calling for the release of Mir Hossein Mousavi, who was still under house arrest after two years.¹⁸² Many Iranians chanted, “Mousavi, Karroubi must be released,” at Grand Ayatollah Taheri’s funeral on Tuesday, June 4.¹⁸³ Although the effects of the Green Movement on the 2013 Iranian presidential elections were not clear and necessitate further research, one can still conclude that the election of a moderate reformist candidate again in Iran testified to the Green Movement’s impact on public opinion. The Green Movement did not end, but one thing is sure: social movements in Iran are not going anywhere, no matter what the government did and will do to prevent them.

¹⁸¹ Charles Kruzman, “Cultural Jiu-Jitsu and the Iranian Greens,” 9.

¹⁸² “Iranian Police Arrest Supporters of Reformist Presidential Candidate,” *The Guardian*, accessed June 8, 2013, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/jun/02/iranian-police-supporters-reformist-candidate>.

¹⁸³ “Thousands of Mourners Chant Pro-opposition Slogans at Dissident Cleric's Funeral,” *The Green Voice of Freedom*, accessed June 8, 2013, <http://en.irangreenvoice.com/article/2013/jun/04/3988>.

V. CONCLUSION

Social movements in post-revolutionary Iran have affected and still affect the Islamic republic to adopt more liberal ways, even though these movements have not managed an institutional change yet. Scholars in the pessimistic camp suggest that the rigid unelected institutions of Iran's complex political system have been the biggest obstacle to any positive change or liberalization in Iran. Yet, the changing dynamics of Iranian society, with an evolving Shi'a Islamic ideology under state-attributed threats, force the Islamic Republic either to find a way to welcome a positive change within the system, or doom the Republic to fall apart sooner or later.

The analysis of two major movements, the Student and Green Movements that arose because of the Iranian revolution's outcomes, proves this argument. Social movements in Iran have become a powerful force in domestic politics, with their opportunity for ordinary Iranians to participate in politics. Their continuity and growing impacts on political competition justify this importance. As a byproduct of the Islamic Revolution, the complex Iranian political system provides fundamental and occasional opportunities as well as threats. Iranian mobilizing structures and resources have grown with the help of IRI's developmental policies, beginning with the Student Movement in domestic politics. Students' free space in universities and links to society expanded because of their organizational and general technological sophistication. The diverse participants of the Green Movement including students, former students from 1999 who are now in the urban middle class and women demonstrate this expansion. Entrenched Shi'a Islam and its daily practices, evolving with global values, in Iran serve as the best frame to wrestle against injustice. Social movements in Iran, as elsewhere, create a new identity, maintain it, and affect public opinion and the electorate as long as their causes continue to exist. Again, the Green Movement expanded its demands and ability to use the same frames of revolution against conservative clergy, in order to show the improvements and achievements of social movements in Iran as a social force. These movements are becoming more of a political actor in an Iranian domestic political environment that encourages liberal tendencies.

Under this analysis, the Student Movement, allying with the reformist elite, changed Iranian domestic politics irreversibly and also questioned the regime's divine legitimacy for the first time. The movement was unsuccessful in attaining its ultimate goals; its long-term effects, however, were significant in Iran. It re-appeared when the Green Movement occurred a decade later. Although it was thought that the movement was finished and dissolved, it once again managed to provide a chance for Iran to change its regime to more liberal ways by influencing public opinion. Although it is too bold to suggest that the election of a moderate reformist president in Iran in 2013 was solely the effect of the Green Movement, one can still argue that it may not have happened without the influence of the Green Movement on Iranian public opinion.

A. UNFINISHED REVOLUTION OF IRANIANS AND THE MAKING OF NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

First and foremost, this thesis takes the 1979 Islamic Revolution as an unfinished work of Iranians, in terms of social movements, and argues that the revolution provided the structural opportunities by its political system, reproduced and equipped mobilizing structures, and promoted Shi'a Islam with its practices as the best frames. The revolution was the achievement of Iranians, not the Shi'a Clergy. They had toppled the last Shah, Muhammad Reza Pahlavi, after a long struggle beginning from the time of the Constitutional Revolution in the years between 1905 and 1911. The revolution was a "multi-class populist movement"¹⁸⁴ in which Iranians demanded "political freedom, essential rights and political independence and in this way to establish Islam and Islamic cultural values in society and create an Islamic government so that there would not be poverty and economic deprivation."¹⁸⁵ This revolution resulted from Iranians' high dissatisfaction with the Shah's monarchic regime. However, the Shi'a clergy stole the people's revolution, under the leadership of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. Rather than a fully democratic government, the Islamic Republic of Iran was founded with Khomeini's concept of *wilayat al-faqih*¹⁸⁶ (guardianship of the jurist).

¹⁸⁴ Berch Berberoglu, "The Class Nature of Religion," 300.

¹⁸⁵ Hamidreza Jalaeipour, "Iran's Islamic Revolution," 210.

¹⁸⁶ Ibrahim Moussawi, *Shi'ism and the Democratization Process in Iran*, 7.

As a result of the foundation of the Islamic Republic and its policies, new social movements occurred in Iran. The IRI, as a unique political system of theocracy with semi-democratic institutions, provides political opportunities for and threats to social movements in Iran. As Paul D. Almeida proposes, there are two avenues for opposition in authoritarian settings.¹⁸⁷ The classical political opportunity of social movements, division among elite, is actualized with the help of the dual legitimacy in the Iranian state structure. The Iranian constitution justifies both the divine and the popular legitimacy through its articles, as mentioned in Chapter I. The Iranian system of government and its incumbent theocratic rulers use elections to testify to their democracy, in which only reformist clergy may find a way to gain institutional access. Elections in Iran serve as an occasional opportunity, as a limited time of tolerance and relaxed state repression. Although these political opportunities have provided motivation for opposition groups to challenge the regime, the real factors for social mobilization have come from threats in Iran such as chronic economic problems, state repression, and erosion of civil rights, all of which drive people into the streets. Generally, economic grievances cannot be the only reason for the huge uprisings; these conditions in Iran, however, turn into political demands with the help of eventual severe repression and violence by the state. Many people deprived by economic hardships, especially the youth and growing urban middle class, take part in social movements because of these unresolved problems and the tyranny of Iran's religious rulers.

The revolution and IRI's developmental policies after the Iran-Iraq War gave rise to five primary opposition forces from different segments of Iranian society: reformist elite, intellectuals, youth, students, and women. Reconstruction of the country after the war years and efforts to spur economic development improved their organizational and communication capabilities. First, the reformist elite separated from the conservative clergy and became the natural leader of opposition groups, since they appealed to intellectuals, youth, and women. Their political position, in the absence of party politics, was that the Shi'a clerics were the "main guiding force for political activity in the

¹⁸⁷ Paul D. Almeida, "Opportunity Organizations and Threat-Induced Contention," 106.

country.”¹⁸⁸ Second, both religious and secular intellectuals opened up cultural domains and pushed modernization and liberation, by their reinterpretation of Shi’a Islam, and showing other fields of intellectual life to Iranian society where religion cannot claim supremacy.¹⁸⁹ With the high population rate of Iran, a new generation of youth emerged and continues to grow in Iran. These young Iranians, boys and girls, reject revolutionary ideology and are more educated than their elders due to the new regime’s developmental policies on education. In the new regime, they suffered and still suffer from the prolonged economic problems and repression that is worse than in the Shah’s time. They have become more politically active, first in schools with student organizations, and later in their lives through their informal links and organizations. Student organizations, which were formerly built by the new regime to support the Islamization of education and society, have turned into bases of opposition organizations in the free space of universities. Art associations, student trade unions, and political student organizations have emerged on Iranian campuses. Women’s solidarity networks and non-governmental organizations also were founded and have contributed to the social mobilization. The Islamic government’s infrastructural developments both changed the face of urban centers into more modern places and helped these groups’ communication and organizational capabilities by extending electricity, telephone, roads, and other available technological means such as TV, Internet, and recent social media applications to even remote areas of the country.

Shi’a Islam, its daily practices, and its historical struggle for justice have become the foremost frames of the new social movements in Iran since the revolution itself created a revolutionary Islamic identity and integrated religion into governance, and the Shi’a clergy tried to Islamize Iranian society. First, although Shi’a Islam did not directly advocate rebellion against the rulers, its founding origins that started the Shi’a–Sunni split in Islam justified a meaningful struggle against tyranny and injustice for the revolution and created an indigenous identity. Since the Shah attacked Islamic values, Islamic practices, and the myth of martyrdom in Shi’a Islam, the martyrdom of Hussein

¹⁸⁸ Reza Razavi, “The Road to Party Politics in Iran: 1979-2009,” 85.

¹⁸⁹ Farhad Khosrokhavar, “The Islamic Revolution in Iran,” 77.

and almost all his close male kin by the Sunni caliph Yazid was a potent theme that demonstrated corrupt and oppressive tyranny. This myth was and still is central to everyday common sensibilities in Iran.¹⁹⁰

Second, the establishment of an Islamic state structure politicized Shi'a Islam and institutionalized the clergy within the government, which had never happened before the revolution. The more the government used Shi'a Islamic principles and laws to rule Iran and solve Iranians' contemporary problems, the more it became an open arena for political discussions. Lastly, conservative clergy started a cultural revolution in Iran in order to clear away the remnants of the Shah's secularization, but it would backfire. From governmental institutions to Iranians' clothes, the revolutionaries dictated Islamic principles and forced them on society. For example, universities in Iran closed in 1980 and their curriculum was rearranged according to Islamic standards between 1980 and 1983.¹⁹¹ "Workplaces, factories, banks and hospitals became sites of moral prescription; sex segregation and daily collective prayers were imposed by law and enforced by hard-line Islamic associations."¹⁹² The Islamization project was forced into all social life in Iran to build an Islamic identity, but this forced Islamization was accepted with different interpretations, if not totally reversed. A new generation molded Shi'a Islam according to their individual world views.

For nearly two decades, the IRI contained emerging dissident social forces and kept them from challenging the regime with the help of the Iran-Iraq War and the charismatic leadership of Khomeini. Later, the successors of Khomeini used all their coercive power and assets to suppress any opposition; new social movements, however, started to utilize the outcomes of the revolution. The Students Movement was the first trial of social movements in Iran in 1999. Later, the Green Movement completely turned into a pro-democracy movement with broader demands, diverse and more participants, and expanded frames.

¹⁹⁰ Jill Diane Swenson, "Martyrdom: Mytho-Cathexis and the Mobilization," 122.

¹⁹¹ Mehrdad Mashayekhi, "The Revival of the Student Movement," 288.

¹⁹² Asef Bayat, *Making Islam Democratic*, 56.

B. THE STUDENT MOVEMENT AS A BYPRODUCT OF REVOLUTION

The Student Movement of 1999 was the first attempt of social movements to change the regime after a long period of an absence of political dissidence. Students, allying with the reformist elite, started the beginning of the divine legitimacy's end. Although the movement was unsuccessful since it could not achieve an institutional change and was suppressed immediately, students became a "focal point of Iran's political developments"¹⁹³ and proved their potential to become a potent force for future pro-democracy movements. In addition, the movement carried the political discussions in front of the public and uncovered the liberal tendencies of Iranian society. When the IRI government severely attacked the students, the Islamic regime started to lose its legitimacy.

The 1999 Student Movement was a civil collective reaction against Iranian state repression of freedom of speech and assembly and brutality. Although the first signs of this movement emerged during reformist President Khatami's campaign when Iranian students effectively participated between February and May 1997, the huge mobilization of students in Tehran, Tabriz, and fourteen other Iranian cities starting on July 7, 1999 to protest the closure of the daily *Salaam* magazine marked the movement's national and international recognition.¹⁹⁴ The students' demands changed during the protests but stayed limited. Their initial protest, prior to the state brutality, was against the closure of *Salaam* and about the press law. After the attack by security forces and militias, the demands turned into "the return of victim's bodies, removal of the head of security forces, identification and punishment of plain clothed individuals (militias) involved in the raid, the accountability for the attack by the Leader, an apology to students for insults they were subjected to during the raid, medical and psychological attention for the injured, compensation for damages, and so on."¹⁹⁵ The IRI government was slow to respond to the students' demands. Students grew more frustrated, and their slogans turned more critical and radical with inconsistent demands. They even mocked the new Supreme

¹⁹³ Mehrdad Mashayekhi, "The Revival of the Student Movement," 84.

¹⁹⁴ Mehrdad Mashayekhi, "The Revival of the Student Movement," 283.

¹⁹⁵ Ali Akbar Mahdi, "The Student Movement in the Islamic Republic of Iran," 6-6.

Leader for the first time, saying, “Khomeinei! Shame on you; leadership is not for you” and “Incompetent leader of the time, is the true cause of this crime.”¹⁹⁶

The built-in handicaps of the Iranian political system started to work with the elections. In 1997, for the first time the Iranian presidential elections handed over the most powerful elected institution of the Iranian political system, the presidency, to the reformist elite with a strong popular legitimacy. The Iranians elected Muhammad Khatami with 69 percent of the vote.¹⁹⁷ His landslide victory was a testimony to Iranians, especially the youth, to demand change since his campaign had stressed populism, economic growth, accountable government, rule of law, and respect for civil rights that would develop a better society in Iran. President Khatami tried to use his strong public support and election victory to change the Islamic regime to more liberal ways and challenged the divine legitimacy implicitly for the first time in Iran, even though the system was under the strict control of the new Supreme Leader. After the elections, the Khatami period relatively relaxed state repression and carried political discussions to the public. The number of publications, ranging from daily newspapers to journals, increased and reached more than 1,200.¹⁹⁸ President Khatami also focused on empowering Iranian citizens and promoted the rule of law with his reformist policies.

His attempts, however, were undermined by unelected bodies of the government. The conservative clergy was aware that the new Supreme Leader Khomeini was not capable of challenging the reformist president’s huge popular support among Iranians, even with his office’s powers, since Khatami was elected instead of Ayatollah Montazeri (who was the Khomeini’s designated successor, given his religious credentials and long association with the regime). The conservatives had to bring together all available forces to contain the president in decision making and legislature.¹⁹⁹ The Guardian Council and judiciary played the leading part in this confrontation. The Guardian Council vetoed the legislation that reformists passed in the Majles on “women’s rights, family law, the

¹⁹⁶ Jenny Lo, “Achieving the Unexpected,” 100.

¹⁹⁷ Anoushiravan Ehteshami and Mahjoob Zweiri, *Iran and the Rise of its Neoconservatives*, 5.

¹⁹⁸ Nasser Momayesi, “Iran’s Struggle for Democracy,” 62.

¹⁹⁹ Ali Gheissari and Vali Nasr, “The Conservative Consolidation in Iran,” 177.

prevention of torture and electoral reform.”²⁰⁰ The judiciary targeted the freedom of the press. While the pro-Khatami press was flourishing after the relaxation of state repression, the Supreme Leader called the reformist journalism a grave threat. The Iranian judiciary banned 108 newspapers and magazines between 1997 and 2002.²⁰¹

While state repression was increasing once again, state violence directly mobilized huge numbers of students to protest the regime when one of the daily magazines, *Salaam*, was closed by the government in July 1999. The possibility of a more dangerous situation of political dissent had caused a severe response from the conservative authority. Students at the University of Tehran started riots in response to the closure on the evening of July 7 and continued the next day, but the Revolutionary Guards, regular police, and hooligans of the Helpers of God (*Ansar Allah*)²⁰² violently tried to suppress the initial movement. The students were beaten, shot, and arrested, causing an officially unreleased number of casualties more than 200 injured and some 500 arrests. Thus, in response to this violence, the protests spread to Tabriz and fourteen other Iranian cities.

In general, the mobilizing structures and resources increased with the reform efforts of Khatami. However, the students among the growing number of Iranian youth were the first to challenge the regime. They were mobilized in the universities, where they could freely discuss the problems of the state and society, as they had mobilized two decades earlier for conservative clergy. The revolutionaries had created the student organizations to support their ideology and produce a new generation to serve them, but their initial supporters became their rivals later. The students’ world views and political stance changed in response to state-attributed economic and political problems, as much as they were shaped by the new intellectuals’ ideas. Students represented the part of society most deeply impacted by the chronic economic problems of Iran. Their changing world views made them realize the necessity for a more open society and personal freedoms. While they were educated and informed with the ideas of new intellectuals,

²⁰⁰ Barbara Ann Rieffer-Flanagan, *Evolving Iran*, 65.

²⁰¹ Said Amir Arjomand, *After Khomeini*, 93.

²⁰² Said Amir Arjomand, “Civil Society and the Rule of Law,” 291.

they began to see the illegitimacy of divine rule. The educational environment at Iranian universities and student organizations' connections helped students to mobilize, as explained in Chapter III.

Growing ideas about personal liberty and freedom within the ideological framework of Shi'a Islam framed the student movements. The students' support of the reformist elite and protest against the closure of the opposition's press were a reaction to state repression of personal freedoms, and this reaction was compatible with Islam. While the students were alienated from the IRI's ideology because of the failure of the revolution's "Islamic Utopianism,"²⁰³ they were influenced by the ideas of new religious intellectuals. Mohammad Mojtahed Shabestari, Abdolkarim Soroush and Mosen Kadivar were among the most notable ones of these intellectuals, who also included President Katami.²⁰⁴ These intellectuals generally argued the importance of popular legitimacy and the rule of law in Islamic terms, as opposed to the conservatives who saw the importance of divine legitimacy with Islamic values. Although these ideas had existed before, the difference this time was that these new religious intellectuals were disseminating their message through growing numbers of pro-reformist press outlets and reaching out to the students in universities in person.

The student protests in July 1999 marked the "beginning of the end" or "Iran's second revolution"²⁰⁵ for many analysts. Huge numbers of students filled Iranian streets, and campuses saw growing numbers of student organizations and rising political activism carried out. The reformist elite could have used the movement as leverage to further undermine the legitimacy of divine rule if they had wanted. However, both the reformist elite's unwillingness to do so and the belligerent behavior of some of the student groups that clashed with security forces prevented that. Moreover, what was missing in terms of social movements in the students' uprising was that the students lacked a unified leadership to keep demonstrations peaceful and maintain consistent demands.²⁰⁶

²⁰³ Mehrdad Mashayekhi, "The Revival of the Student Movement," 302.

²⁰⁴ Mehran Kamrava, *Iran's Intellectual Revolution*, 122.

²⁰⁵ Jahangir Amuzegar, "Iran's Theocracy under Siege," 135.

²⁰⁶ Elaine Sciolino, "Iran Students Halt Protests But Still Press for Changes."

C. GREEN WAVES OF A UNIFIED PRO-DEMOCRACY MOVEMENT

Unlike the 1999 Student Movement, the Green Movement was a pro-democracy movement that united the separate mobilized groups with broader frames and peaceful tactics in reaction to the 2009 presidential election's results. It arguably shook the IRI's legitimacy after Supreme Leader Khamenei's partiality in response to the alleged election fraud, when he backed President Ahmadinejad and the Iranian government's brutal repression of peaceful protesters. The Green Waves changed Iranians' opinion about the regime's legitimacy.

The initial slogan in the protest, "Where is my vote?,"²⁰⁷ was invoked by the opposition groups to demand their stolen votes and annulment of the election, but the demands expanded in time and targeted directly the Supreme Leader Khamenei as discussed in Chapter IV.

The Green Movement happened when the Iranian state's continuous and occasional opportunities, along with threats, served in different ways for a larger group of opposition. Before the 2009 elections, although the conservative camp seemed united, there was an internal power struggle between traditional and new conservatives that created an opportune division of the elite for opposition groups, especially the reformist elite, to exploit. The presidency of Ahmadinejad transformed the political struggle in Iran from conservative versus reformist to an intra-conservative one.²⁰⁸ The conservatives, in fact, had created their own paradox when they tried to contend with liberal reform efforts during President Khatami's two-term presidency by empowering the security and economic apparatus of the IRI while the Guardian Council and judiciary attacked the reformers' assets.²⁰⁹ A new faction of conservatives was born as neo-conservatives or neo-principalists,²¹⁰ whose members were rising from the echelons of the IRGC and *Basij*.

²⁰⁷ Abbas Milani, "The Green Movement."

²⁰⁸ Anoushiravan Ehteshami and Mahjoob Zweiri, *Iran and the Rise of its Neoconservatives*, 54.

²⁰⁹ Vali Nasr, "The Conservative Wave Rolls On," 16.

²¹⁰ Roozbeh Safshekan and Farzan Sabet, "The Ayatollah's Praetorians," 550.

While the conservative elite was being divided further with the rise of neo-conservatives and the intra-conservative struggle was continuing, the 2009 presidential election and relative relaxation of state restrictions on media during the election period provided an occasional political opportunity for the reformist groups. Former President Mohammad Khatami initially announced his candidacy, but later withdrew in favor of Mir Hossein Mousavi. The reason for Mousavi's re-emergence in politics was primarily because of his disagreement with President Ahmadinejad's policies. He emphasized the necessity of addressing the poor economy and "dishonest methods of making economic and political decisions."²¹¹ Mousavi's presidential campaign mobilized the major reformist groups as much as others who were eager to remove Ahmadinejad.

The rise of Mousavi and his election campaign raised a challenging constituency, but the Green Movement had already started and the legitimacy of the IRI began to shake when the election was alleged to be rigged and ended with Ahmadinejad's landslide victory. The result was problematic, since the number of eligible voters was lower than in the previous elections in 2008, which was impossible with the population growth rate of Iran. Moreover, the SMS network had been turned off, observers of Mousavi's campaign were expelled from polling stations, and insufficient precautions were taken to prevent vote selling and ballot-box stuffing. The IRI's government never took any real action to appoint an independent commission to investigate the election fraud. All of this undermined both the credibility of the elections and public trust in the electoral system.²¹² The problematic presidential election created question marks on the tenets of the popular legitimacy of the system, but the Supreme Leader made his biggest mistake when he supported President Ahmadinejad after the elections and warned that he would use violence to stop protests. He had not made such a mistake during the 1999 Student Movement that directly confronted him and his office with Iranians in the streets.

Although the IRI's continuous and occasional political opportunities were working, the main motives of protesters in the Green Movement were the economic problems, state repression, and the sudden erosion of civil rights after the elections.

²¹¹ Jenny Lo, "Achieving the Unexpected," 131.

²¹² Gunes Murat Tezcur, "Iran's Presidential Election," 15.

President Ahmadinejad's populist policies and pragmatic efforts could not solve Iran's prolonged economic problems, which mobilized many Iranians first to support Mousavi and later the Green Movement. However, it was state repression and theft of Iranians' votes that changed economic grievances into political demands and brought huge numbers of people into the streets.

Although the Green Movement in Iran did not have an intact hierarchical structure, the reformist faction of the ruling Shi'a clergy, many intellectuals from universities, journalists, and a growing educated middle class took part in the Green Movement. Their organizational capabilities and links had increased with the help of the Khatami era reforms and strengthened in time. While reformists proposed better governance and took support mainly from the urban middle class in the election, Iranian students and women became the frontrunners of the movement with their informal and underground links to Iranian society. Although there is scarce data about the Green Movement's mobilizing resources, information and communication technologies were among the biggest resources of the movement that enabled the opposition to bypass government censorship and inform Iranians.

Shi'a Islam and its daily practices framed the Green Movement in Iran. The new version of reformist Shi'a Islam, growing ideas of freedom and democracy among Iranian youth with an Islamist perspective, and the holy struggle against tyranny told in Shi'a history resonated in both the minds and hearts of the Green Wave's protesters. The Green Movement attacked the regime's monopoly on Shi'a Islam by reinterpreting the meaning of injustice and equating the incumbent government with the secular regime of the Shah. The protesters used Shi'a Islam's values, symbols, stories, and practices in their actions, just as the 1979 revolutionary groups had done. They placed the Green Movement's martyrs next to the Shi'a Imam, Ali, in their fight against the injustice of the IRI's government.²¹³ It was a "cultural jiu-jitsu,"²¹⁴ as Charles Kurzman put it. The Iranian government's reaction and its repression showed the conservatives' fear of losing their power.

²¹³ Michael M. J. Fischer, "The Rhythmic Beat of the Revolution in Iran," 509.

²¹⁴ Charles Kurzman, "Cultural Jiu-Jitsu and the Iranian Greens," 9.

The Green Movement lost its intensity when the IRI's government increased the level of violent repression, but the movement was never totally dissolved. Although many thought it was unsuccessful when it waned, the Green Movement was actually a victory in two ways. First, the movement was successful in uniting the separate mobilized social groups with broader frames and peaceful tactics. Second, the movement silently continued, and its efforts changed Iranians' opinion, which eventually was reflected in the election of a reformist candidate in the first round of the 2013 presidential elections.

D. CONCLUSION

It is too early to tell whether this chance will bring more liberties and more democratic governance to Iran. Future actions of the new Iranian president will show it. This is also not to say that the Green Movement is finished because its demands are not yet fulfilled. One thing, for sure, in Iran now is that the government solved the election problem without a huge confrontation with the Iranians, but social movements are still there and demanding more liberalization in Iran. This thesis lacks data about the effects of social movements on the electorate's behavior, which necessitates further research, but it still suggests that there have been effects on society and public opinion in the form of a different state structure and society. While social movements are on the rise in the Middle East and North Africa and their effects are still unseen, this thesis can be an example for scholars of social movements and politics to better assess the consequences of these social movements and their effects on those countries' domestic politics and societies.

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